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MISS GWYNNE

OF

WOODFORD.

BY

GARTH RIVERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

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MISS GWYNNE OF WOODFORD.

CHAPTER I.

MAUD.

"'Poor race of men,' said the pitying spirit,
'Dearly ye pay for your primal fall;
Some flow'rets of Eden ye still inherit,
But the trail of the serpent is over them all.'"

THE June sun blazed gloriously that fine afternoon over the far-stretching woods and meadows of Forrestrange and Woodford. The drenching thunder-rain that had fallen in the early morning had cleared the air, which now was filled with the smell of new hay; for in the hayfields scores of haymakers were hard at work, turning and spreading the saturated haycocks.

Just the day for the country! Pleasant even on the flat high road, where tall hedges shut out the fields from view, for the dust was washed

away, and the leaves and grass on either side glistened fresh and green, glancing light and shade as stirred by the soft west wind.

"Capital harvest!" said Squire Forrester to himself, as he emerged on his mare Nell from a shady lane into the broad sunshine flashing across this same high road. "Capital! The hay'll be in before the week's out, if it goes on like this."

Here the squire took his hat off, and wiped his head and face; then turned in his saddle to look behind up the green lane. There was no one in sight, so exclaiming, "The young ones can take care of themselves, I warrant," he rode on, at Nell's own peculiar pace: which, be it known, was no pace at all, being neither a walk, nor a trot, nor a canter, nor yet an amble; but a mode of proceeding partaking more of the nature of a run than anything else.

Presently two other riders appear in the shady distance. The squire's son, Stephen, and young Maud Gwynne, the squire's godchild and pet.

The lane was too narrow to admit three riders abreast; their horses, too, were not so fresh as Nell, it would seem, for by the time the road is reached they are considerably distanced by the squire and Nell.

He is far ahead now, passing a roadside public-

house, where the landlord and a customer are standing at the door. They touch their hats.

"You should be at work yonder," says the squire, pointing to the adjacent meadow, "instead of helping one another to do nothing here."

The men laugh, and the squire goes on. They look after him, and the landlord says to the customer,

"Be'ent is onner ail an 'arty, Jim?"

"A perfec pictar o' cattle, God bless 'im," replies Jim.

Whereupon they watch the stalwart squire out of sight.

"Look t'other way," exclaims the landlord, winking as Maud and Stephen appear round the corner.

The other grins.

"They be a fine pair; I never see a no arnsomer," he says, dropping his voice as they approach.

"Well, Jenkins, have you a good tap now?" asks the young man, pulling up his horse.

"Hexcellent, Mister Stephen: ome-brewed last Hoctober!"

"Bring me a glass, and take one yourself. Bring a third for my friend Jim too."

The ale was brought. Stephen threw down the money, smiled at Maud, and quaffed the "'ome-brewed."

"Capital!" he exclaimed. "Jenkins, bring me another glass."

Maud Gwynne rode on. Stephen swallowed the ale at one draught, and galloped after her.

"Why wouldn't you wait, Maud?"

"I—I don't know." (Hesitatingly.)

"Was it because I took that second glass?"

She coloured, but made no answer.

"Well, you didn't mind my having *one?*"

"Of course not."

"I see; you were disgusted at my taking two."

"I thought it scarcely necessary."

"Pooh! You're so mighty particular. Perhaps you think I smoke too much?"

No answer.

"You do; I know it. Pooh! why don't you say so, then?"

She laughed: "As if you would mind what I said!"

"But I should; I do, Maud."

"Not one bit."

"I swear I do; you know it quite well too."

"Let us overtake your father," she interrupted, setting off on a canter.

Instantly Stephen stopped. He pulled a pipe out of his pocket, filled it, lit it, smoked it, and followed at a walk. Puffing away, he presently came up to where she and his father had reined

in their horses, at a low white gate. This was the way to Woodford, Maud's home.

"You must come on to Forrestrange, Maud," said the squire. "I will send up from the village, that your father need not expect you to-day."

"No, thank you, godpapa; I must go home this evening."

"Nonsense, my dear!" interrupted he, hooking her horse's bridle with his whip. "Nonsense! come on with us. Your father won't mind losing you once in a way."

"Oh, but he won't enjoy his dinner if I'm not there! Everything will get cold, and he'll go on reading! He'll forget his tea too, and all his papers will get astray into the bargain. You don't know the misfortunes that occur when I'm away."

"Well, my dear, as you think best. I won't urge you against your duty. Tell him to make haste over to Forrestrange; say that I rather think I'm in for a fit of the gout: I've had two or three sharp twinges to-day, and he must bring you over. Good-bye."

The squire rode on.

Stephen opened the white gate.

"Good-bye, Stephen," said Maud.

"Won't you shake hands?" quoth Stephen, in an injured way.

"Of course. Why not?"

"I thought you were cross."

"Cross! oh, no." She laughed and put out her hand.

He took it.

"Maud," he said, holding it in his own. "You don't like my smoking so much, now do you?"

"I think it isn't quite good for you, Stephen, indeed."

"Then look here! You see this pipe? it's a great beauty, and splendid in point of colour; but because you don't like my smoking, I will throw it away. There——" saying which he flung the coal-black treasure over the palings. "Now you will believe I mind what you say; won't you?"

She seemed too intent on counting the hairs in her horse's long thin mane, lifting them with her whip, to answer.

"Do you believe me, Maud?" he asked in a low tone.

"Well—yes."

She shook her bridle and galloped off, as Stephen, reddening like fire, turned his horse and trotted smartly after his father.

Maud presently slackens speed. A strange new sensation has crept over her: delight pervades her whole being. The warm blood coursing

swiftly through her veins, dyes her cheek, as in imagination she recals Stephen's manner and still feels the pressure of his hand.

It is a glorious summer afternoon. There is no dust in the air; the trees are green and fresh; and the birds sing blithely above Maud's head, as she passes under the overarching boughs.

"Everything is happy," she thinks as she rides slowly homeward. "How delicious is summer!"

She is full of joyousness, and at last sings out in a loud beautiful treble, just like one of the birds.

Was it the pleasant afternoon that occasioned this happiness? The less said on the subject the better, perhaps, for Maud is not yet eighteen. But, had the day been dark, dreary, cold, nipping, she would have been quite as happy, and enjoyed her ride just as much.

Maud is the squire's godchild, and his pet. He thinks that she and the two-year old filly he has in the home paddock, are the most promising young things in England: this he has frequently said, since Maud came home from school these holidays.

There is no surpassing beauty in her face; but again and again you would be attracted to look at the serious, intellectual countenance, the

clear grey eyes, soft and melancholy in repose, shining with subdued fire when animated, the expressive mouth, which has a peculiar charm when she smiles: in fine you would derive pleasure in resting your eyes on that young, vigorous, earnest face, and in watching its varied expression.

At present she is so sunburnt that you would not be able to discover her natural fairness, except when she takes her hat off; then you see her forehead, white, massive and beautiful, like a Saint Cecilia by Guido.

She is only half Saxon. Her father came of an old Welsh family, whose rank and place went to the dogs, so to speak, long ago.

Mr. Gwynne inherits Woodford from his mother, who in her day was an heiress. His wife—Maud's mother—died four years ago, when Maud's little sister was born. Since that time Mr. Gwynne has lived in great retirement, associating with few besides his neighbours the Forresters.

His only son Hugh has been Stephen Forrester's schoolfellow, and the two young men are now together at Oxford.

Hugh went to Wales with a party this vacation: Stephen refused to join, avowing he preferred reading at home.

Forrestrange is just two miles from Woodford,

Maud's home, and the country for miles round, except where Woodford interferes, belongs to the Forresters, who, from generation to generation, have lived at the fine old place.

Woodford is a modest dwelling compared with Forrestrange; but Maud thinks nothing of this as she comes within sight of home this evening. She rides on happily, and her handsome black galloway Rupert (her godfather's gift) quickens his pace and neighs as he approaches the stables, to which Maud rides direct.

After dismounting, she hastens through a laurel grove to the house, and knowing it is dinner-time, she enters by a window which opens on the ground floor, hastens up to her room, takes off her riding-dress, dresses speedily, and runs down to her father, who is sitting amongst books and papers in a small room adjoining the drawing-room.

"Well, my dear?" That was all he said, scarcely looking up from the book he was engrossed in.

She kissed him.

"Oh, papa, I've had such a delicious ride! Rupert is splendid. I can't tell you how I've enjoyed the day."

"I'm glad to hear it, my dear. You shall tell me about it presently; now I'm busy."

"But you mustn't be busy any longer; dinner is ready. Let me have this, papa."

She took the book out of his hand, put a mark in, closed it, and laid it on the table.

"Ah, Maud, you tyrant."

She stood leaning on the chair in which he reclined with a patient air, evidently quite abstracted with what he had been reading. He had a pale, tranquil face, an expanded brow, and thoughtful grey eyes. Maud was very like him; only where you read in her countenance vigour and decision, you saw in his, depression. Altogether he was a refined, intellectual, sad-looking man, seemingly not strong in health.

Dinner was announced.

"Come, papa; I'm so hungry," she said.

It was very odd that after this avowal she did not enjoy her dinner more. She had no manner of appetite to-day; but she was very urgent her father should appreciate the merits of the pink, crimped salmon, to the enjoyment of which she herself was oblivious.

"You don't appear to be eating anything, Maud. I thought you said you were hungry?"

"Papa, I'm eating enormously." She coloured crimson as she spoke, and applied herself to roast meat with vigour.

Then she asked her father about the draining

in the alder meadows, and got him absorbed on this favourite subject, and presently proposed walking as far as the meadows after dinner.

"I daresay you have not been out to-day; now have you, papa?"

"No, my dear," he replies. "I'll go with you, though, if you wish."

So after dinner, away they go, Maud on his arm.

They pass through the farmyard, where the cows are being milked. Jenny, the dairymaid, is there with her stool and pail; Maud sees the milk flowing easily, frothing up in the pail, and is seized with a desire to milk one of the cows herself. Jenny recommends the Guernsey, as being old and steady, kept in the herd for the sake of her rich milk. Maud sets to work. To say the least her milking is peculiar, for in a remarkable manner the milk squirts in all directions but the desired—into Mr. Gwynne's face one moment; into her own eyes the next. She struggles at it, however, and has succeeded in getting a little, a very little, I may say, into the pail, when the Guernsey having had quite enough of it, gives a kick, gets her hoof into the pail, and puts a stop to the proceeding.

Maud is considerably spattered over: her hands are stiff and uncomfortable. "But it is a most

delightful occupation," she avows, as she proceeds to the meadows.

The sun is low; the alders throw deep shadows on the rich green grass; bits of red clay tubing lie scattered about in all directions.

"Oh, papa, these pipes ought to have been cleared before the grass grew," said Maud.

"So they ought. Why didn't Roberts see to it? He will be here directly; I must tell him to have it done forthwith."

As Mr. Gwynne speaks, a number of workmen emerge from a deep drain some little way off, who collect their tools and prepare to leave the meadow: there are fifty or sixty men, in red or blue flannel shirts. The scene is rendered quite lively immediately; picturesque life brought into the still, lovely sunset scene. They pass by where Mr. Gwynne and Maud stand, touching their caps, and wishing good evening as they go by. Lastly, a man in a suit of drab clothes, short, fat, smooth-cheeked, with a very small hat on his big head, comes up.

"Fine hevenin', sir."

"Yes. Roberts, you should have had this broken ware cleared before now."

Roberts scratched the head to which the hat was a joke.

"Get it done to-morrow," continued Mr. Gwynne.

"Yes, sir."

"When will the work be completed, think you?"

"More than I can say, sir," casting a careless glance round.

"Can't you give me any idea? I assure you I don't feel disposed to go on paying such high wages to so many men."

"Oh, sir, you're sure of getting your money back," interrupted Roberts.

"But I want to see the work done."

Roberts scratched his head again. "Well, sir, I b'live I may undertake to say, it will be finished the hend of the hautumn."

Maud exclaimed, "Why Mr. Roberts, the men have been at work since November."

"They 'ave, Miss."

"Then indeed it ought to be finished *now*. There are the Fordlands above: if I recollect rightly, the same number of men were there six months only, and the acreage is considerably more."

"Well, Miss, this will be done in time, to hanswer to the Fordlands: Squire Forresters, bain't they? Maybe I misreckoned the job; prob'ly now I think of it, we may come to a hend the *beginning* of the hautumn."

"I hope so," said Mr. Gwynne. "This draining

has been far more expensive and tedious than I imagined it would be."

"I dare say, indeed, sir. But the vally of the land eventually will be treble what it is now."

"Of course. Good evening, Roberts."

"Good evening, sir, and Miss."

Maud turned a cold shoulder on Mr. Roberts, and walked on.

"Papa," she said, "I am certain that man is a cheat: I always thought so; this evening more than ever."

Roberts thought, "I hope that 'ere young miss is not agoing to interfere with my arrangements: she's sharp—too sharp by a great deal," and he walked away, after the men.

Maud and her father reach the main drain, where the fall is so good, that the water rushes on in a mimic river. It is excellent drainage; the low-lying land at Woodford will be quadrupled in value: already the long rushes, and smooth velvety patches of swamp have disappeared, and hay grass waves where last year there was only morass. But the hay is sadly trampled down far and near, and there will be no good of it this year at any rate.

Mr. Gwynne describes to Maud the scientific system in which the draining is carried out. She tries to attend, and at any other time perhaps

she might have felt interested; but now the low red sun flashes on the windows of Forrestrange (a mile distant), and do what she will, she cannot keep her eyes or her thoughts off from where the bright lights glitter in the great wood.

Mr. Gwynne goes on talking and walking until they reach the river, which is here crossed by a wooden bridge. The other side belongs to Forrestrange; this, to Woodford.

The sun goes down behind a bank of purple and gold; they stand and watch its setting. Nothing breaks the stillness of the evening but the flow of the river, and every now and then the baying of an old hound faintly heard. The west is all one glow of fiery red.

"Oh, papa, isn't it beautiful?" exclaims Maud.

He pats her cheek and says, "Very; but we must turn homeward, my dear: see, the river-damps are rising."

The red is burning out; a deep orange glows over the western horizon, dying away overhead to pale golden light. She turns with her father homewards. There, towards the east the sky is yet blue, and one pale star trembles. Maud shivers involuntarily as she faces the white mist creeping up from the river, and again she looks back to the warm sunset sky.

"Come, Maud, it will be dark before we get home; these open drains are dangerous too."

She wrapped her shawl closely round, and placed her arm within her father's, walking alertly on, talking and amusing him in the quick falling twilight. The stars shone thick and bright long before they reached home, and as they paused on the gravel sweep, the moon rose above the dark tree tops and flooded the night.

Was it the glorious evening influence which caused such fulness of happiness to-night? Existence alone was joy, she thought. She must needs remain out a little longer to enjoy the moonlight. The tall beech-trees rose peaceful in the still air, glistening in silvery light, except where shadows lay in mellow gloom. But it was not the deep night sky, the clear moon, the pale landscape which absorbed her: she looked for a light—to her a beacon—in the distance.

She did not look vainly; out of the woods rolling up from the river bank, now transformed to shadowy paleness, it sparkled bright, like some low set star.

Stephen had said one day, "Maud, I go out on the terrace every night, to look for the light at Woodford; sometimes I see it plainly, and then I feel inclined to rush over: I suppose you

never take the trouble to look for the light at Forrestrange?"

To which she had replied, "But I do: only the curtains are closed frequently, and I can't see your light."

After that day it gleams visibly, every night. Maud goes in presently, strangely joyous; the lamp is lit in the drawing-room; she draws back the window curtain, and then makes the tea, which she and her father partake of in calm contentment.

Some days afterwards there was a county meeting at Frorn, which Mr. Gwynne attended. On his return he told Maud that neither the squire nor Stephen was there, and that he (Mr. Gwynne) called at Forrestrange and found Mr. Forrester laid up with gout. Maud must go and visit him on the morrow: he expressed great surprise she had not been before.

"Did you see Blanche, papa?"

"Yes, my dear."

She wished to ask another question, but did not.

Now Maud attributed Stephen's absence from Woodford, and to-day from this county meeting, to his having begun to "read hard;" which he had told her he was about to do, the day they

rode together last. She was glad of this: she was ambitious for him, and wished him to apply.

She had told him not to come to Woodford, as she knew it interfered with his reading: there would be plenty of time for holiday enjoyment, she said, after the examination. She had heard Hugh urge Stephen to work now; for he was abominably idle: how he had passed previously was a riddle. Hugh said that with the capabilities Stephen had, he ought to take a first-class, but if he idled in this way, he could scarcely scrape through; so Maud, who would cut off her right hand to advance him, declared positively he should not waste time with her, and refused to ride out again for ever so long—for a whole week. This was the day week, and she attributed his non-appearance to-day to this county business; but when Mr. Gwynne said Stephen was not there, she did wonder a very little, and thought that perhaps after all there was no occasion for such close study—such exceeding application.

When the day ended, and there was no chance of his coming, she felt sorely disappointed. True she had desired him on no account to be distracted from his reading; but what woman does not feel ruffled at a man's obedience, if it should happen in the end to take even the semblance of indifference?

CHAPTER II.

ARCHERY.

"And after summer, evermore succeeds
Barren winter, with his wrathful nipping cold.
So cares and joys abound, as seasons fleet."

"WHO passed the window, Blanche?"

"Stephen and Kate."

Mr. Forrester forgot his leg was gouty; for the moment was insensible to the fact of its being stretched before him on a green leg rester, and he gave a sharp turn. A horrible pain shot from the swollen knee to the shoulder, and down again to the flannelled thumb.

"Ugh—ugh!" he cried, pulling a wry face.

"Oh, you have a bad attack now, I know!" said Maud, who was standing in the bow window. "Can we do nothing for you?"

Her godfather made no reply. His cheeks were screwed up, his forehead wrinkled.

"I am sorry to say we cannot," whispered Blanche, going on writing a letter.

"Don't whisper," exclaimed the squire, savagely; "and Blanche don't write here—that scratching goes through me: I asked you not, before."

Blanche wiped the pen, put it into her desk, collected her papers, and walked out of the room without a word.

Presently the gouty patient's acute pain ceased, and the contortions left his face. He opened his eyes and exclaimed, "There!"

"There!" was a form of thanksgiving—it was the squire's first grace after dinner, too, and Maud understood it as such.

"You are better now," she said.

"Yes, my dear. Put this pillow right—take care"—(he winced)—"you don't know what the gout is."

"Oh, I am so sorry you suffer such great pain. Why won't you have a doctor?"

"A doctor, child! a doctor would kill me at once! nothing disagrees with me like physic, filthy stuff! No, no, I wish to die naturally when my time comes: no doctors for me while I have my senses."

Maud could not help smiling, he spoke so irately. The squire regarded doctors as antagonistic to the health of the human race.

"This leg rester isn't right, Maud. I don't think you can settle it properly—ring for Jack."

"I can. Let me try." She gathered up her riding skirt, and adjusted the whole apparatus to the squire's satisfaction.

"Take your hat and habit off, Maud; Blanche will give you a dress. Of course you will remain the day here."

"No, thank you, I must be going soon. Papa will be glad to hear you are downstairs again: I can tell him you are better?"

"Yes; but sit a bit longer, Maud: you are in no hurry."

"Oh, no—that is—nothing particular. I am afraid of tiring you, godpapa."

"Pooh! Nothing of the sort. I like to have you when I'm not in pain, but when my leg feels as if screwed up in a vice, then I wish everybody at the —— Halifax I mean. You mustn't talk at that time: now, you may speak as much as you like."

"I want to tell you about Rupert," said Maud, directly. "We came through the meadows, by the ford; he took me so beautifully over the ditches: he is so nice, so handsome, so tractable. Oh! I can never thank you enough for giving him to me."

"I am glad you like the horse; I thought he would turn out well: he is just the thing for you. Did you ride alone?"

"Oh, yes; I would not have a servant with me on any account. Rupert and I are perfectly happy, and understand each other quite well as we race over the meadows: a servant behind would destroy our pleasure quite; I know I should be looking continually to see if he were still alive."

Maud laughed, and her godfather laughed too. Inwardly he applauded her, for there was nothing he liked better than independence and spirit; but he said,

"I think you ought to have some one with you, until Rupert is more tamed. Stephen will ride back with you: haven't you seen him this morning, Maud?"

"No: that is, only through the window. I saw him pass just now," said Maud, blushing scarlet.

"See whether he's in sight."

Maud went up to the window and looked out.

"Yes," she said briefly.

"Is Kate Bryan there, too?"

"Yes."

The squire gave another fidgety turn, and pulled another wry face.

"Go and ask her to come and see me, Maud; she has not been this morning," he said, gruffly.

Maud was about to obey—indeed, was just stepping out through the low window, when she suddenly drew back.

"Why don't you go, my dear?"

"Perhaps—I don't know—I had rather not."

"Call Blanche—she's in the next room."

Blanche came.

"What is Kate doing?" he asked.

"Practising archery."

"Is it Stephen who teaches her the use of bows and arrows?"

"Yes. Don't you remember she asked him to do so the other day."

The squire grunted.

"I thought he was very busy," said he.

Blanche elevated her eyebrows, but made no reply: she walked to the window and sat down.

"I was not aware Miss Bryan was here," observed Maud.

"We found her on our return the other day; the day, by-the-by, you rode out with us," replied Mr. Forrester.

Maud now declared she must go: she rang the bell and ordered her horse.

"Stephen will go with you, my dear: I want him to take a business message to your father, and bring me a reply. Call him here, Blanche."

"He will scarcely like to be interrupted in the archery," replied Blanche.

"Damned nonsense!" ejaculated the squire, angrily. "If this is the 'reading' that prevents him attending to the business of the district, as I heard him make excuse yesterday, there shall be an end of it." (The squire was getting into a tremendous passion.) "Call him here, Blanche—or stay, I will see about it myself."

He seized his crutches, which were at hand, and started up; but the effort was too great: the pain became excruciating. He dropped into the chair, the crutches fell with a clatter, and Blanche and Maud, quite frightened, ran up.

While they stand silently by the poor squire, whose face is distorted with suffering, we will take a survey of the group and the place.

The squire leans back in the great cushioned chair. He is a fine, stalwart man, with a hearty, jovial, comely countenance when in health; but at present he pulls so wry a face that you cannot see the expression. His hair is silver white; but he is not so old—not more than sixty. He is a fair specimen of the true country gentleman: great in the field, amongst his tenantry, and in county matters. He is chairman of the quarter sessions at Frorn, and is sufficiently well up in the law, to deliver true judgment

on cases which are not sent to the assizes. He, too, can turn the scale of an election, without suspicion of bribery or corruption; for all his tenants, to a man, would as soon think of eating frogs as voting against their landlord.

The Forrester family was the first, and oldest in the district, and Mr. Forrester is one of the most influential men. He has travelled much, and observed more, and is very original. Singularly kind and benevolent to some; unforgiving and prejudiced with regard to others. His preferences and dislikes he carries to an extreme: thus while Maud is his pet and favourite of all living things—not excepting his own children—this young lady, Kate Bryan, is his aversion.

He never had but two children, Blanche and Stephen. Mrs. Forrester died when they were young. Blanche is several years older than her brother, and for a long time it was thought there would be no heir to carry on the name; but when the supposed heiress was ten or twelve years old—quite old enough to understand her own consequence—a boy was born, a fine lusty fellow, who grew up into the handsome young man we now know as Stephen Forrester.

You might *trace* a resemblance in Blanche to her father, but that is all: there is no striking likeness; she has a high Norman forehead, cold

blue eyes, straight nose, small mouth and thin lips. She is very good-looking; and the reason she has not married is, because her pride has rejected the suitors she has had. Pride is her ruling passion: all other considerations are absorbed in this. Very kind to all beneath her, and much beloved by her inferiors, she is haughty as lucifer to her equals, and to those who are deemed (she deems none) her superiors.

The Gwynnes are an exception: they are the Forresters' nearest neighbours, and the intercourse between them is like that of close relations; Maud, therefore, understands but little of this pride of Blanche's.

Will she by-and-by?

The two stand now by Mr. Forrester's chair. Blanche knowing from experience that this violent pain will stop presently, and patiently waiting in that expectation; Maud wishing with all her heart for it to stop, and impatient at his suffering, the tears rising to her eyes meanwhile.

We will leave them thus, in the long, low, old-fashioned library, and through the bay-window, step out on the terrace.

This is certainly a beautiful landscape—perfectly English.

Forrestrange standing on a hill, we can see from hence a great extent of country. Below,

the broad river runs, winding out like a silver thread in the mid-day sun, from the far distance now wrapped in soft blue haze, through the rolling Woodford woods and wide pasture lands to the forrest glades, stretching away to the west, and hidden in the great trees sweeping away far out of sight, melting as it were into the summer sky.

But we have more to do with these two figures in the foreground than with the view: although Blanche Forrester stands here occasionally with great pride; for all she sees, except that unpleasant Woodford, belongs to Forrestrange. Just look at them!

Stephen we know to be a very fine young man, and every inch a gentleman in appearance. He is tall, well built, and very powerful, has light hair, large blue eyes flashing into mirth or anger, as the case may be; a handsome nose, with a large but veiled nostril; a short upper lip, and beautiful mouth, with full chin and lower lip; and a massive neck and throat, rising from broad chest and shoulders. In short, Stephen Forrester is one of the finest young men in the county, and of fascinating manners; for notwithstanding his strength, he is gentle as a lamb to all weak creatures; to wit, all the pretty girls.

There is a gaily painted target opposite where

he and his companion now are, and he is evidently instructing the lady in the art of shooting; he holds the bow with one hand, while with the other he lifts her elbow to the proper elevation. She is slight and most elegant, and he is looking down at her, with mirthful eyes. As the arrow flies—wide of the mark of course—she bursts into a merry laugh, while her hat, in some unaccountable manner, falls off her head. How lovely she looks! Her complexion is brilliant, her features are perfect, her dark lustrous eyes wonderful in beauty. It is delightful to look at her, with her black silken hair falling in ringlets over her white neck, and little curls lying in dark rings on her alabaster forehead.

She glances up merrily, her hat hanging from her neck; and as she raises her arms to adjust it, an impulse seizes one to clasp the slender waist displayed to advantage by the action. Doubtless Stephen feels the desire to do so, but being near the house such a proceeding might be perfectly well viewed by others; so he only laughs, and draws another arrow from the quiver.

"Try again, Kate," he says.

"Ah, there! it's quite beyond me to hit the mark," she cries, with an accent which suggests wit and drollery;—"it's quite entirely beyond me."

"No, no; try."

"It's laughing at me ye are; sure it's yourself I couldn't hit, were ye converted to the target this minute."

"Try, if you like. Come, Kate." He placed himself a few yards from her.

"Indeed, no. Suppose I killed ye dead!"

"Nonsense!—Shoot away."

"Ah, no, Mr. Stephen."

Stephen came up to her.

"Why do you call me Mister Stephen, Kate?"

"Shall I tell ye, then?" looking up with her beautiful eyes.

"Do."

"It's because ye are grown into such a grand man since I last saw ye—that is why."

"Kate, how absurd! I shall call you Miss Bryan if you call me Mister Stephen."

"Please, no. Please, never call me anything but Kate—cousin Kate, sure enough. Aren't we cousins, Mr. Stephen?"

The black eyes dropped, the long dark lashes casting a delicate shadow under the drooping lid on the peach-like bloom which suffused her cheek. Stephen saw it all, of course, and was just going to speak, when a horse's hoof crunched the gravel behind him. He turned to look, and saw Rupert led round.

Instantly the archery was forgotten; even Kate

was forgotten too, as, springing away, he cried:—

"By Jove, there's Rupert! Surely, Maud is not leaving now. There she comes from the house, I declare!"

The squire having got easier, Maud tied her hat-strings, put on her gloves, took up her whip, and when she saw Rupert led round, said good-bye.

"Must you go, my dear? Well, thank you for coming; make haste here again, will you, Maud?"

Mr. Forrester stooped his forehead and submitted to an embrace, exclaiming, "There!" when the salute was over.

"Be sure you come to-morrow or the next day," he called after her, as she left the room with Blanche.

At the hall-door old Pompey, Mr. Gwynne's Newfoundland dog, which invariably followed Maud, began barking with intense joy: ever since she had been within, he had sat bolt upright, in a kind of first position, in the doorway.

Pompey was decidedly in the way on these occasions. He would never budge an inch from

where he located himself, his eyes glaring in an unpleasant, not to say personal, manner at all who came near, and directly Maud appeared, his delight would be extravagant, manifesting itself in the most grotesque capers and friskings, and the queerest sounds: at the present moment Pompey's actions are perfectly ludicrous, the dog being about as agile as an elephant.

Maud springs on to the saddle just as Stephen runs up breathless.

"Why didn't you wait for me to help you?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, thank you, I managed famously," replied Maud.

"I am so sorry you are going; if you'll wait until after our early dinner, we'll ride with you: Kate and I are going for a ride in the afternoon. Do stop—do."

He pulls her skirt, and holds out his arms to help her off again.

"I wish you would, Maud. You may as well," urges Blanche.

"Not to-day."

"Of course it's no use pressing you when you've one of these obstinate fits on. I know from experience when you are in one of these moods, the more I call the more you won't come: isn't it so?"

Maud smiled: Stephen pulled the curb rein. "You shan't go," he said.

Rupert reared. Kate Bryan, who had joined the party, gave a little scream.

"Let go," exclaimed Maud, as Stephen held the bridle fast.

Kate Bryan screamed again. The horse was getting quite wild, snorting violently, and making every effort to rear.

"Let go his head," cried Maud; "he'll get perfectly unmanageable if you don't."

Stephen relinquished the rein, and in one moment Rupert laid back his ears, plunged, flung out behind, and galloped off at full speed; Pompey following as fast as his weighty constitution would permit.

"By Jove! isn't Maud a splendid horsewoman?" exclaimed Stephen, looking after her. "Why, Kate, that first fling would have sent you over the brute's head, goodness knows where; and you, too, Blanche."

Blanche shrugged her shoulders, and went indoors. Kate Bryan coloured a little, and asked,—

"Shall we go again to the bows and arrows, Mr. Stephen?"

"Yes, if you wish:" but his ardour for archery was extinguished.

He stood watching Maud, who by this had succeeded in checking Rupert's speed. When she had disappeared in the wood, he moved leisurely after Kate, who now was collecting the arrows.

Just then his father's man, Jack, brought him a message. Stephen fitted one arrow, placed the bow in Kate's hand, and told her to go on, while he went in to his father.

"Oh, no; I'll wait for ye; I don't mind to go practising all meself—I can't do it alone," she said, dolorously.

"Try: I'll be back presently; but I must attend to my father now."

He went. Kate shot that arrow, dropped the bow on the ground, and sat down on the grass to wait until Stephen should re-appear.

Rupert carried Maud towards home briskly. She had quitted Forrestrange without the least betrayal of her feelings; but now, drops of sadness fall from her eyes. Hastily she dashes them away, and tries to analyze the sensations which cause these tears. In her way, she is philosophic, and though choking, she repeats to herself,—

"For every evil under the sun
There is a remedy, or there is none.
If there's a remedy, try and find it,
If there is none—never mind it."

Which bit of poetical wisdom she tries to apply.

"What is the evil?" she asks herself. "My own folly! that is it. I shall get over it in time, and then I shall be wiser. It is weak and silly to give way." (A sudden rising of pride, in which the tears are suppressed.) "And why should I care? He is at perfect liberty to stay with Miss Bryan if he chooses. . . . He is welcome to give over coming to Woodford. . . . There is not the slightest occasion for him to be the least kind to me . . . Of course not. He is not my brother, that I should feel hurt by neglect, and by his casting me off for other people . . . Oh, dear, no."

She tries hard to grieve herself with the idea of Hugh acting towards her as Stephen has done. But the argument fails; she cannot experience such pain from the parallel as she expected—pain that might absorb her present hurt. "Well," she goes on reflecting, "I have discovered the evil: I have got too fond of Stephen. Now for the remedy: I must vanquish my folly; I must bear his indifference to me—it is evidently the case—and I must become indifferent to him. That will be the best remedy."

Maud makes her mind up to this, as Rupert stops at the Woodford Gate. She passes through, and nearing home, resolves to subdue her feelings; nevertheless, weighed down by the conviction that the future to her will be very dull indeed.

Now many might marvel at a girl like Maud Gwynne being so strongly attached to a gay, careless young man like Stephen Forrester; but it is impossible to account for these things.

Theoretically, high-minded, clever, noble women of course only love good, wise, worthy men. But practically, is this the case? She never knew, until to-day, that Stephen's preference was essential to her happiness: of this she has been as ignorant as a child, who little knows how necessary its nurse is to its happiness until the said nurse has departed. Maud resembles the child, with this difference,—that whereas Master Charley or Miss Louisa perpetually crieth for nursey, Maud maketh up her mind to do without Stephen; only a similar sense of void and misery is there.

For the last three or four years Stephen has appeared to consider Maud as belonging to himself, accompanying her in her rides when at home; to the discomfiture of Hugh, who, not being famous as a horseman, finds it hard to keep

up with them, affirms that the two are maliciously trying to leave him in the lurch. Stephen has told Maud more than once that he is always happy when she is with him. She asked why he should not be? whereupon he looked foolish.

Soon after passing through the gate, Maud sees her father, little Mary, and Mrs. Pritchard (the nurse and general factotum), in the distance. She puts on a cheerful air, and canters up.

"Did you have lunch, miss?" asks Mrs. Pritchard, when Maud has concluded the account of her godfather's health.

"No, I wouldn't wait; they dine early, now Mr. Forrester is ill."

"Oh, well, you must come and have some cake."

"No, thank you, I am not hungry, Mammy."

When they reach the house, Maud goes up to her own room, and sits there the whole afternoon; a book is before her, which she does not read; her eyes wandering away over the landscape.

Again it is a bright summer day; the soft west wind undulates the swelling woods, and the meadows are fresh and green between Woodford and Forrestrange. But Maud only feels how very wretched she is. She thinks of the winter days when the trees were leafless and

icy winds swept over the barren country. She was happy then, however bad the weather and loud the tempest; for Stephen came!

"This won't do," she exclaims now, starting up. "He has changed, and I must also."

Dressing quickly, she hastened downstairs.

CHAPTER III.

WRATHFUL.

"—— yet do I fear thy nature."

When Maud left Forrestrange that morning, Stephen went into the library.

"Jack brought me a message, father. Can I do anything for you?" he said, entering.

"Do anything for me?" reiterated the squire, crossly. "Yes; you can shut the door, to begin with."

Stephen, having intimate knowledge of the effect of gout on the temper, did as he was bid, softly enough.

"I fear you suffer much, father."

"Suffer!—little you care how much," interrupted the squire.

Stephen walked to the window, and leant against it, looking out. Kate happened to be sitting on the grass in full view.

"Confound your folly, can't you keep your eyes off that girl?"

"What?" asked Stephen.

"Can't you keep your eyes off that girl, I ask?"

"Easily. Does this suit you?"

He turned his back on the window.

"You may laugh at your father if you choose," said the squire, waxing excessively wrathful; "but I tell you what, Master Stephen; I'm not going to stand any damned nonsense: d'ye hear?"

He moved his gouty leg uneasily.

"I don't know what you mean by damned nonsense!" retorted Stephen.

"Don't know what I mean? You do, Stephen. Don't tell a lie," roared the squire, in a voice of thunder.

Stephen tries to get up a look of astonishment: it is a failure. He understands perfectly what his father is at.

"You comprehend me thoroughly, sir; I know you do," pursues the squire, angrily. "So I request you will not look at me in that way. I scorn a man who either acts, or tells a lie."

Stephen is becoming very pale. He twirls his watch chain rapidly. "You are insulting me," he says; his rising passion almost stifling his words.

"Insulting you! who insults you? I tell you again not to act or tell a lie. You never had

that in you before. I'faith, it's something you've learnt lately."

"Say what you have to say, and have done with it," interrupts Stephen, hotly. "I'm not going to remain here all day."

"By George, you shall understand me, then, once for all. I give you now to know I will not have you making an ass of yourself, flirting with that Irish girl. I will not have it, I say."

Stephen, with a very white face, curls his lip scornfully, and laughs a short, forced laugh.

"Oh, ay, laugh! The day may come when you will be inclined to sing another tune, perhaps." The squire, now in great pain, moves restlessly; his face flushed deeply. Marked lines come on his countenance; evidently he suffers acutely. Stephen cannot help perceiving this, and his hand works nervously at the chain. For some minutes there is silence, then he says,—

"Father, I have made you angry; I am sorry for it. Be easy on my account, I will not displease you again."

The squire becomes mollified directly, and Stephen paces the room, forgetting his father's gout.

"My boy, sit down and be quiet. You cannot comprehend how that stamping torments me," says the patient meekly.

Stephen sits on the edge of the table, while his father, as if soliloquizing, goes on:—

"I ought to have known better than let a girl like this have the run of the house. If the boy is taken with her, it's my own fault in a great measure. I don't wish to be hard on her, but if his welfare is endangered, she shan't remain: I won't have any tomfoolery going on."

"Father, father!" interrupts Stephen, rising and walking about again. "Haven't I told you I will not act contrary to your wishes? You are worrying yourself needlessly, I assure you."

"Well, Stephen, remember my advice. Have nothing to do with this Irish girl—with none of the breed, indeed: they are precisely of the same nature as their horses, which before you have done with them give you a nasty kick, or an ugly tumble. And the women are the same—exactly the same—will let you pat and fondle; but, run at you open-mouthed, and bite viciously in the end—ugh! a bad breed altogether."

The squire is thoroughly satisfied with the analogy; he thinks the reason is conclusive, too. Is Stephen so impressed? It is difficult to say. He walks up to the window, twirling his chain violently; it snaps in two. He disregards the accident, and says,—

"I never entertained an idea of anything serious with regard to Kate. Does that relieve you?"

"So far, that I am deuced glad to hear it. But Stephen, I shall be still more glad when you give up all this nonsense; I can never forgive you if you have anything to do with Kate Bryan. One day I will tell you why; this is enough now. I mean what I say; I do, by George!"

The squire is so carried away by strong emotion, that, unmindful of the state of his hand, he lifts it up, bringing it down with all force on the table. Instantly, all feelings, sensations, flee to an agonized thumb; existence becomes concentrated there. In excruciating physical pain, he groans; while Stephen, who knows he can do no good—fears rather he has done harm by remaining—leaves the room.

Stephen is warm-hearted, and is grieved his father should suffer: sorry in his heart, indeed. Just now, another feeling mingles with this sympathy: remorseful regret. Qualms, hitherto disregarded, arise in force within as he reflects on his late method of amusing himself.

The "reading" (only a pleasing fiction), which he is desirous his friends should believe he is immersed in, and the reason of his being at home now, is not the thing in the squire's opinion, who has stated his dissatisfaction two or three

times. Yesterday he became positively displeased on finding his son excused himself from attending the County meeting at Frorn, on this plea, yet spent the whole day in idleness, or amusement with Kate; in fact, carried on a strong flirtation with the young lady. This, together with his staying out to-day, and never once coming near while Maud Gwynne was in the room, occasioned the poor squire's angry excitement, more easily roused owing to the irritability attending his gouty condition.

Stephen knows this, and betakes himself to what Maud calls his den—a large vault-like room in another wing of the building—in a state of annoyance with himself. In this retreat he need fear no interruptions.

He throws himself into a lounging chair and ruminates; his thoughts were something in this strain :—

"Certainly, I've been a great muff; it is all gammon staying at home to read. I'll join Hugh's party: I'll set off to-morrow; I know the poor governor wishes me to do so. Deuce take it! what made me get Blanche to write, and ask Kate here now? Positively not two straws do I care for the girl, only she is so droll and amusing. Pretty she is without doubt, and I like to look at her, but as to any deep

feeling for her, I have none. I declare even my admiration is of a mild sort, now I think of it: something like a weak flame, which a puff of wind blows out. At this moment I don't think I admire her at all. How different Maud is to her! By Jove, yes." (Here his face reddens.) "I wonder now whether *she* thinks I'm spoony on Kate? If she does, I must undeceive her."

He starts up, twists the broken chain into a knot, sits down again. "Maud cannot think that; oh, no! What a difference there is between the two! Kate has such a way of making a fellow on good terms with himself; Maud, on the contrary, makes a fellow dissatisfied: that is, makes him feel as if he ought to do better than he does. It is impossible to work if Kate is near; since she has been here,—indeed whenever she comes,—I can do nothing but talk and laugh: my brains get bothered somehow. But Maud keeps out of the way if she thinks she interferes with my work. I know that *she* would have me read like blazes now. Can she suppose I'm in love with Kate? I wouldn't have Maud think that really, for all the world. I'll be off to-morrow; then it will be all right. Kate may stay as long as she likes: of course they'll all see that I can't care very much for

her, when I leave her behind. Yes, that's the best thing for me to do; and I know it will please the governor too."

Stephen, smelling of cigars, strides away an hour later to arrange an immediate exodus.

CHAPTER IV.

PHYSICAL AND METAPHYSICAL.

"Looking on the lines of my boy's face."

MEANWHILE the squire, in a paroxysm of pain, has been roaring for Jack. Stephen has never thought of his father's inability to rise and reach the bell, consequently he is left helpless; the servants are at dinner, and the attendant Jack concluding that "Mister Stephen is with master," resigns himself wholly to boiled beef.

Jack—or "the boy," as his master speaks of him sometimes—is a youth of fifty-five. He has lived with the squire from boyhood, and believes him to be one of the greatest of earth's potentates. The squire, on the other hand, knows Jack to be the most honest and faithful of servants; so the two are strongly attached, indeed necessary to each other. Jack having, to say the least, made a good dinner, or, to use his own expression,

having "had his fill," thinks he will "go and see how master do now." As he crosses the hall, he hears the roars, "Jack! Jack!" and running hastily, he slips on the polished oak floor, falling and bumping his head against the library door, which bursts open. Sprawling, he unexpectedly appears in his master's presence.

"What are you at now, you Jackanapes?" cries the squire, every nerve in his body jarring.

"Oh, master, I couldn't help—!"

The valet rises, ruefully feeling his head, where a new bump is being rapidly developed.

"Couldn't help, you booby! Couldn't you help being out of the way when I called?"

"Oh, master, have you been a-calling long?" Jack trembles visibly.

"Long a-calling! Mind me, Jack: the next time I am so long a-calling, this is what you'll get for your pains in being out of hearing."

The squire lays hold of his crutch in a threatening way. Much believing Jack bobs—not without reason, honesty compels me to say. It is not mere tradition which makes him expectant of what may happen: however, the missile is not discharged now.

"Oh, master, wot a please to have?" demands Jack, his head considerably on one side.

"Wot a please to have?" repeats the squire, imitating Jack's voice and manner. (Mockery of Jack's questions was a symptom of gout, invariably). "What dost think I'll have, eh?"

"Oh, master, the chicken broth?" suggests Jack.

"No." He drops his voice, and says, "I'm very bad, Jack—very. I must go to bed: help me upstairs."

"Oh, master!" exclaimed Jack, really concerned, and proceeds to help his master tenderly. By the aid of a crutch and Jack, the squire gets to his room; he is assisted to bed, and lies so quiet that he is "worser than common," Jack thinks.

The squire is ill—very ill. The excitement he has undergone has been too much for him in his present state; he now suffers terribly. His brain works "wheel within wheel," as he tells Stephen by and by, when he comes to impart his intention of leaving home on the morrow. But he does not say what the mainspring of that ceaseless motion is; he does not tell Stephen that it is anxiety on his account. Not until lately has it struck Mr. Forrester that it is highly probable Stephen will fall in love and marry one day—that he is of an age for such weakness. This idea occurred to him on witnessing the flirtation between his son and Kate Bryan,

and nothing in this world would be more contrary to the squire's wishes than a marriage here.

"She is too like her father by half to have much good in her," he argued this morning to himself. "She has a pretty face and good shape, but nothing else. She is just the kind to get vicious—hasn't a spark of worth in her. Heaven save the lad from being fooled by her, as her father, the scoundrel, fooled poor Meg! my poor, poor Meg!"

Now, restless, fevered anxiety increases mightily. No man was ever prouder of his son than the squire is of Stephen: unknown to himself, he almost idolizes the lad. Mingled with this affection at the present hour, indignation against Kate's father, Daniel Bryan, stirs him, and thought of Margaret Forrester his cousin, long since dead and buried in a crowded cemetery: these feelings are all jumbled up together.

As the afternoon wears on, swift-flying, strange-shaped thoughts pass through his brain, wheel within wheel, as he describes; until at last they begin to press heavily, and then he sinks into deep sleep.

Stephen has regained equanimity; his father growled approval of the plan of joining Hugh Gwynne in Wales, and suggested his (Stephen's) walking over to Woodford, to inform them of

his intention; "in case Maud might wish to send some parcel or other to her brother: girls were always given to that sort of thing."

Closeted in his room, with his ally Bob, Stephen has been making a wonderful litter, which he believes to be a process of packing. At last, Bob, or as he is known in polite circles, Sykes, who is a superior order of mortal, says:—

"Reely, sir, I can menidge the pecking without your troubling yourself further." Then Stephen, whose trouble has consisted in throwing his things on the floor, desires Bob to mind to put up everything, and flinging off his coat, washes, assiduously brushes his hair, pays a little attention to his collar, and walks away.

On the terrace Kate saunters; she has been in a state of amusement at Stephen's new-made intention the whole afternoon. Dejection succeeds the amusement now. As he approaches she says:—

"Surely ye'll change yere mind concerning the morrow?"

To which he replied: "No, Kate; I'm off at six in the morning."

"Then it's not for many a long day I'll see ye again!"

She looks wo-begone, and a tear trembles on the long silken lash.

Of course, as he is voluntarily departing so soon, it is nonsense for Stephen to change in manner for one evening; the going away is proof sufficient that there is to be nothing more between them.

"You are not so sorry as I am, Kate," he says.

"Ah, then, Mr. Stephen, that's not true at all."

She looks up to his face, her dark eyes overflow, and her lovely mouth quivers. She turns her head aside, as if to hide her grief.

Of necessity he must say something kind. Had he not been leaving so soon, he might have been more guarded. As it was, when he found kind words were of no avail to stop the tears, he drew her close to him, whispering, "We are cousins, Kate; you mustn't cry in this way: being cousins, I may kiss you."

He did so, once, twice, thrice; then briefly said, "Good-bye, Kate," and hurried away,

In the red sunset he hastens through the wood, over the bridge, across the meadows, to Woodford. Kate, who guesses whither he has gone, dries her eyes directly he is out of sight; she even smiles, and under the cedar, at the end of the terrace, sits to await his return.

At Woodford, in the light of the sunset sky,

Maud was straining her eyes, before candles were brought, in reading to her father. She sat on the floor by the window, her back to the glowing west, and went on until a step on the gravel caused her to look out. Stephen was there.

It was not unusual for him to come over in the evening, but Maud had never expected him so little as to-night. His unexpected visit now caused all her feelings to start into insurrection.

Fortunately, the dusk hid the blush which overspread her face, and no one could tell that her nerves thrilled or her heart beat faster.

"You have come just in time for tea," she said, starting up.

"Yes; ring the bell for candles, Maud: really I think I must have been asleep. Has it been dark long?" asked Mr. Gwynne.

"It isn't quite dark yet," replied Stephen.

"My sight gets so bad sometimes."

"Oh!" remarked Stephen vaguely, while Maud rang for lights.

Before candles and the tea-tray were brought, she regained mastery of herself.

Stephen, addressing Mr. Gwynne, mentioned the object of his visit, asking whether there was anything he might take to Hugh.

The change that came over Maud's countenance when she heard him say he was going to-morrow, was not seen, thanks to the urn hissing and steaming between them. She felt a sharp pang. A moment before, her sinking heart had been revived; Stephen had come again!

Now, when she knew why, the happiness all went: the pleasure fled; for as a duty he came—he could not go away without. It would have been downright rude to have left home, especially to join Hugh, without coming to take leave at Woodford.

The clock struck ten; Stephen started up.

"Going so soon?" asked Mr. Gwynne.

"I must: my father's gout is so bad that I don't wish to disturb him in the morning; therefore, I must say good-bye to him to-night."

"True; it is better you should not delay. Farewell, Stephen."

They shake hands warmly. Maud offers her hand quickly, anxious for the parting to be over.

"Won't you walk down with me a little way, Maud?" he asks, not taking her hand.

"It's too late, Stephen; high time for you to put the best foot foremost, as you have to see your father to-night. Get home as quick as you can," says Mr. Gwynne.

"Just to the front gate!" pursues Stephen, disregarding Mr. Gwynne. "It won't be late by the time I get home. Blanche and Kate never go to bed before eleven."

"Certainly, it is too late," says Maud. "Good-bye, Stephen."

Again she offers her hand; again he does not touch it: lingering still.

Maud can command herself no longer; she just manages once more to say good-bye, and good-night to her father too, and leaving the room hastens to her own, bolts the door, throws herself on the bed and cries as if her heart must needs break.

Stephen walks home in the white moonlight and considers himself extremely meritorious in leaving on the morrow: he almost forgets it was his own suggestion to go, and thinks he is actuated by nothing but filial duty.

The squire, who has slept all evening, awakes, when Stephen goes in to say good-bye.

"Eh? going in the morning? Yes, yes; I remember. Better than kicking your heels in idleness at home: you'll be back in two months. Send for money when you want it: have you enough now? That's right; bad not to have plenty in your pocket when you go from home. Good-bye, Stephen. Speak the truth; stick to

your creed; and the devil won't meddle much with you." The squire laid his head on the pillow, and before his son left the room slept again.

CHAPTER V.

ANXIETY.

"And all for love, and nothing for reward."

Mr. Gwynne and Maud are walking by the river the following day, in the bright, glowing, July evening. It is still warm, almost sultry.

An avenue of beech-trees leads from Woodford to the river ford; below which there is a salmon weir, where now the foaming water catches the sunlight, and bright rainbow tints hover above.

In the meadow near, the cows are grazing after the evening milking, before which they stood chewing the cud, knee deep in the water, for hours. The herd—all beautiful cows, except the Guernsey, which to look at is thin, bony, even ugly—are grazing on the sweet herbage which carpets the embankment enclosing the pasture lands, over which the river cannot rise to overflow the lowland, as it formerly did after heavy rains.

"The cows' breath is so sweet!" observes Maud, as they pass by. "They have just been milked; and here is my friend the Guernsey cropping amongst buttercups, but looking half starved."

"Where, Maud?"

"This cow next to us, papa."

"I don't perceive any difference between her and the others."

"Oh, papa! See how sleek the others are; besides they are large, spotted, dewlapped cows in high condition, and this poor-looking friend of mine is a scraggy dun."

"Very odd: they all appear to me alike," said Mr. Gwynne, peering towards the herd. "But the evening is dark, and of late I have discovered I can't make anything out at twilight."

"Papa, the sun has not yet set."

"But it is dark nevertheless: we shall have a change of weather I think, the evening sky is so obscure."

Just here, Mrs. Pritchard was seen approaching from the direction in which they were going: she had been at Forrestrange, the squire always insisting on one visit from Maud's nurse during a fit of gout.

"Here comes Mammy," cried Maud.

"Well, master, are you 'joying your walk?"

asked Mrs. Pritchard, coming up: "My stars! it is awful hot to be sure!"

"How is Mr. Forrester, Dolly Pritchard?"

Dolly Pritchard, called by all the young ones Mammy, untied her bonnet strings, mopped her face and replied,

"'Deed, master but very middlin', in my opinion."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, sir, I sat in his room an hour or more; tho' he was sleepin', sleepin', sleepin' in snatches the whole time: I never saw him the same before."

"Perhaps he will be better to-morrow," suggested Maud.

"'Deed an' I hope so, missy; I promised him as how you would be sure to go there to-morrow. If he asked me to send you once, he asked a dozen times."

"Dear godpapa," said Maud, softly.

She stepped aside to gather a wild flower, and Mr. Gwynne turned to walk homeward with the nurse. Maud stopped a moment on the bank, looking down where in deep shadow the water flowed under the sedges and glossy green leaves. She gazed at the quiet stream, bowered here by great branches, and could not resist lingering and listening to the low sound coming up from amongst the reeds and water plants. She enjoyed the

quiet gloom at sunset, more than the flashing, thundering weir, sparkling in prismatic colours further up the river.

Here she had often sat with Stephen; for in some gnarled tree roots near, a mossy seat had been formed. The spot has great attraction for her somehow, and in spite of herself she cannot help recurring to the last time she was here—with him.

"He is so kind, so generous, so manly and brave," she thought, his image involuntarily arising in her mind; "is it to be wondered at that I grew to like him so? But this is folly. Truly if love be a delusion of youth, as I've been told, it needs a strong constitution to get over it." She walked on after her father. "Folly to remember, or think of Stephen: if love be delusive, it is very heart-breaking nevertheless."

Directly Mr. Gwynne left Maud, he asked,

"What sort of evening is it, Dolly Pritchard?"

"Very close and hot."

"No, no, I don't mean the temperature: doesn't the sun look very dull and the sky dark?"

"Dull, master! Laws no, sir. The sky is clear as can be."

Dolly Pritchard, left a widow at the age of eighteen, became nurse to her present master, then a young child. She brought him up entirely,

and when he married and had children, nursed them too; feeding, spoiling, and loving Hugh, Maud, and Mary, as they came. She is chief functionary at Woodford, and rules with vigour and judgment her subordinates. She has been a very handsome woman in her day; now she is thin, tall, upright for her years, and very active. She wears a shortwaisted, scanty gown with long tight sleeves, and no change of fashion affects the style of her dress. Never has she been remarkable for politeness of speech, and on the present occasion, she asks (after a pause, during which Mr. Gwynne rubs his eyes, shades them with his hand and looks up at the sky again),

"And what makes you have that notion, sir?"

"Because, Dolly, if the sky is bright and the sun clear, I must be getting blind."

She glances up at her master quickly and looks at his eyes; there is neither redness, dimness, nor weakness of any sort.

"Tut, master, you are nervous: it's the bile, prob'ly," she says.

"Indeed I can't think that; I have feared before that my sight is failing."

"Then it's all along of keeping so close to books, and them nonsensical papers," she interrupts in an angry voice, and goes on inveighing

against reading and writing more "than's good," winding up by insisting on administering a pill that night: "For in course it's the bile, and nothing else."

But Mr. Gwynne really is becoming blind. The blindness is coming on painlessly, increasing gradually and steadily; so subtly, that he is unaware—or has been unaware until very lately—of impaired vision. Even now he attributes it to some temporary derangement of the system.

"Well, Dolly, I hope it may be."

"Tut, yes; a pill will set you all right, I warrant, master. For my own self, I know I can't neither look right nor left when the bile troubles me; so it's the same with you, I'll be bound."

Mr. Gwynne is content to think this. Maud has joined them now.

"Papa, lose not a day in getting advice," she says, anxiously. "Do pray go up to London, and consult the first oculist at once."

"Perhaps that will be best."

So it is arranged. The next day Mr. Gwynne went to town.

Maud rode over to Forrestrange.

Blanche was rejoiced, she said, to see her friend.

"Papa has asked constantly for you, Maud: come to his room at once, will you?"

They went, leaving Kate Bryan in the drawing-room.

The squire seemed asleep as they softly approached his bedside. They stood quietly by for some time, when as Blanche made a sign to Maud to withdraw, he opened his eyes and looked sharply up. He did not appear to recognise Maud at once, but as she stooped and kissed his forehead, he suddenly exclaimed, "Is it you, Maud?"

Closing his eyes again, he presently asked in a vague way, "Where is Stephen?" and then slept.

"I don't think he suffers so much pain as usual," whispered Blanche. "He sleeps the whole time in this way."

"Oh, he will be better to-morrow. Don't you think a little cooling application might refresh him, his forehead is so hot?" said Maud, softly.

"Is it?"

"Oh, yes, very."

"Bathe it with vinegar and water then. Mammy suggested our doing so yesterday, but he would not let me: he will let you perhaps, Maud, Here it is."

Blanche brought some in a saucer, with a linen rag to dab it on.

"I tried before," she said, "but had to desist, and was expelled the room."

"When?"

"Last night: he was very flushed then; to-day he appears much cooler, and I didn't think of it. Stephen's going away, I fancy, upset him yesterday. Certainly he is much better to-day—oh, much better."

Maud sat at his bedside, bathing his forehead assiduously. In the course of an hour he wakened, roused up thoroughly, and smiled when he saw Maud.

"Is it you, my dear?" he said.

Jack at this moment happened to bring some broth into the room, and seeing his master awake, without any unnecessary words Jack advanced.

"What have you got, Jack?"

"Hexcellent broth, sir."

He held the spoon to his master, who, however, knocked it away.

"Oh, master, you want for somethink indeed; do try a sip or two," remonstrated the servant.

"No, no, not now."

"Oh, master, one spoonful—just one."

"No; go, Jack." The man went. "Maud, you will stay? I have no appetite for anything,

but I am not too ill to wish you to remain: tell them not to tease me with food, will you?"

So Maud remained there, until Blanche insisted it was tea time. After tea, Maud went up again, and stayed till night came; remaining even after the squire desired everybody to go to bed. She could not define what kept her; stay she did, however. She seated herself resolutely in the chair at the bedside, and told Blanche that as soon as she (Maud) felt sleepy, she would go to bed, but at present she felt so wakeful that she preferred sitting up for another hour or so; whereupon Blanche wished her good-night.

Kate Bryan came into the room to say good-night too, but the squire never opened his eyes while she was there, and directly she and Blanche left, Jack in a loud whisper announced to Maud, "Master never do abide Miss Bryan when's gout's bad."

"Too like her father — too like — too like," muttered the invalid.

Maud was alarmed to hear her godfather mutter in this way, and she looked frightened; Jack observed this, and remarked *sotto voce*,

"Master's always going back to the time me and him was young, when's ill, missy."

"Too like—" he went on again. "Maud, tell Kate Bryan not to come in here: I don't

wish to see her," he said, suddenly starting up.

"I'll see she don't, master," said Jack, soothingly.

"Ay, Jack——poor Jack!"

Jack smoothed the pillows, while the squire sitting upright, said,—

"You are to me as my own child, Maud: I will tell you why I don't wish to see that girl."

"Oh, never mind to-night," interrupted Maud; "you shall tell me when you get well."

"I will tell you now:" he seized her hand with his own, which burnt like fire. "Now, Maud, I don't mind Jack: honest Jack, he knows all."

"That I do, master."

Maud trembled, she scarcely understood why; but she sat quiet, her hand locked in the squire's!

"When I was Stephen's age, or younger," he began, reclining on the comfortably arranged pillows, "I was going to be married to my cousin Margaret."

"Oh, she was a beauty!" put in Jack.

"Wasn't she, Jack? Stephen is very like what she was: she was a true Forrester in appearance, so is the lad. Well, Maud, we only

waited till I should come of age; but in the meantime I had to be away on business matters, and during my absence a villain told her lies and swore I had forsaken her—and—and the end was he got her heart, and she married him!"

"Warn't it a shame?" observed Jack.

"Ay, but the sin was burning, damnable, when poor Meg was forsaken," exclaimed the squire in great excitement. "Think of that, Maud! Margaret was left—— she would have died in want, had not Jack accidentally discovered where she was miserably lodged."

"Yes, only by chance like, too. I and master were travelling, and one day I was looking about me a bit at some outlandish place, and I heerd some folk talk of Mrs. Bryan, Mrs. Bryan perpetual; so I pricked my ears and heerd the people say as how the consumption had hold on her, and how no husband was with her, and what would become of the baby when the mother died, and I came and told master."

"So you did, Jack. She was dying, Maud. She did not live long after."

"No more she did," interrupted Jack huskily. "But she had a proper funeral, thanks to master."

"The child, a girl, throve well."

"So she ought when master purvided so handsome," said Jack aside.

"*His* relations took her to Ireland, where they lived; there she grew up, coming over here at times, as you know. She might have made Forrestrange her home, Maud; but, instead of resembling Margaret, she took after her father in every way; even in voice and manner. She is so like him, that when I see her, I see her father too; and when I'm ill, it's too much for me. There: you won't let her come in here again, will you?"

He moved restlessly.

"Margaret was so beautiful," he presently said.

"So is Kate!" exclaimed Maud, with a pang of misery.

The squire sighed.

"She's her father over again; not like her mother at all: she has his disposition too." He raised himself again, he looked his godchild in the face, and slowly said, "If she ever draws Stephen to think of her, do what you can to prevent; promise me this: kiss me and promise, will you, Maud? If the lad goes wrong, do what you can to bring him straight, will you?"

Maud did not promise. She kissed him but uttered no word.

He lay down, tired and feverish. "Say, Our Father," he said.

Maud knelt, and before the prayer ended he had slept again. Sleepless, anxious, unhappy, she sat the whole night at the bedside.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SWIFT RIVER.

"The eternal surge of time and tide rolls on,
And bears afar our bubbles."

At Woodford Mrs. Pritchard is uncommonly busy preserving fruit, and she thus soliloquizes while picking the strawberries:

"Deary me! four years to this time missis came in here asking so sweet and kind how I was getting on. Deary me! It was the same basket, and the same preserving pan: I always keep them. *They* are just the same: not a pin the worse for use, and poor missis gone to dust by now! Deary me."

Mrs. Pritchard's fingers being stained by the juicy fruit, she doesn't choose to fumble in her pocket for her handkerchief, so she gives a great sniff, and the tears that will come after, she wipes away with her apron; continuing her soliloquy:

"Missy is getting the imidge of missis, especial when a bit troubled. Deary me, how I was minded of her when master drove away yesterday and missy stood looking after the carridge! She looked 'xactly as her mamma used to look. How long will she be kept at Forrestrange, I wonder? The squire lays great store by her, that's plain; and well he may. He'll find out her value more and more when she's his daughter-in-law — as without doubt she will be one day. She don't know that she's growed up liking Master Stephen. He—but he's a rogue all the same, is doated on her. They'll make a proper couple, they will—the beautifullest in the country. Its only nat'ral they should be fond on each other."

Here a drumming of feet at the door, and a high demand for immediate admittance put Mrs. Pritchard's meditations to flight.

"Open dekly, mammy; I've been looking for 'ou everywhere," said the small voice.

Mrs. Pritchard admitted Mary, who forthwith clambered on a chair and made a dash at the strawberries.

A girl came running down the passage.

"Susan, arn't you 'shamed to let the little child out of your sight? didn't I particular desire you would take her out till dinner? you knew she

wasn't quite well and that I was busy over the preserving and didn't wish her to come across the fruit to-day."

"Indeed, Missis Pritchard, I did take her out, but she ran from me when Robert Sykes come galloping up to desire you would go over to the hall, you and Miss Mary."

"Robert Sykes! is the Squire worse?"

"I don't know; they want you there, anyhow."

"When were we desired to go?" asked Mrs. Pritchard.

"So soon as possible—he say Miss Gwynne it was who send for you, Mrs. Pritchard."

"'Deed, I am afraid the Squire is more poorly, and missy 's unhappy," said Mrs. Pritchard, placing Mary on the floor.

"He said he saw missy this morning; she was pale and anxious-looking, but she told him his master was asleep. Jack say to Sykes, Squire Forrester 'ave been the same, without stirring, since twelve last night."

Mary taking immediate advantage of the moment, possessing an inquiring turn of mind, has on tiptoe tried to investigate the contents of the saucepan on the iron stool. Failing to do so to her satisfaction, she lays hold of the side with her two hands; the stewpan upsets, she

suddenly sits on the floor, and the lava-like stream of syrup flows into her lap.

"Oh, my!" screams Susan, who first witnesses the catastrophe. "Oh, my, Mrs. Pritchard!"

Mary is too astonished to speak, and contemplates the pool in her lap wonderingly. When she understands she has done mischief, she takes refuge in a loud cry.

"Laws bless us, the child!" exclaims Mrs. Pritchard, rushing up.

Forthwith ensues a reprimand on Susan's usual conduct—the enormity of which is dreadful to contemplate, and the results terrible to anticipate; in the midst of which Mary is borne off to the nursery.

By and by they set off to Forrestrange. When they get there, Maud runs to Mrs. Pritchard and takes her to Mr. Forrester's room at once; whispering,

"Mammy, I am miserable! They think he is sleeping; but indeed I don't know whether it is sleep or heavy illness: you will be able to judge."

She went, and stayed a short time; then drew Maud away and cried,

"He is ill, missy! very, very ill! It isn't sleep at all. Tell them to send for Doctor Moore at once; there is not a minute to lose. He is

the same as my father was when he got the stroke."

Dr. Moore was sent for; when he came, he was closeted with Blanche and Maud for some time, after seeing and prescribing for the squire. In consequence of what he said, Blanche was carried fainting upstairs. Sykes was told to travel night and day, without stopping on the road, after Stephen. Maud, with a face like death, again sat and watched at her godfather's bedside.

The day dragged on to night, the night gave way to morning, and there was no change. Everything that medical skill could do was done, but the squire lay unconscious, numbed by an icy hand.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUIET HOUSE.

"He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

THE long summer day had closed; sunset hues had faded; and moonlight silvered the glades, glancing athwart sable shadows, as Stephen reached home.

Peaceful stood the old hall in the still summer night. No sound was heard, no light was visible, when he rapidly drove up.

But near the low-arched doorway three or four people were standing, who silently made way as he rushed past.

All the front rooms were deserted: he knew that, for there were no lights. Straight through the hall he ran without inquiry, up to Blanche's room. She was not there, but Dr. Moore was.

"Oh, Dr. Moore, how is he?" he hastily asked.

The doctor wrung Stephen's hand, mutely.

"Oh! is he so very ill?" faltered Stephen.

The tears came to the honest doctor's eyes, and he turned aside without speaking one word.

Stephen stood there petrified: he looked like a man asleep, yet with wide open staring eyes. Ghastly pale he became—unable to speak or move—as if clutched by some horrible nightmare.

The good doctor turned again. This silence was dreadful.

"Sit down, my boy," he said; laying his hand on Stephen's shoulder. Then, with a burst of awful grief, Stephen cried,

"Oh! God help me, my father is dead—and I killed him!"

Dr. Moore tried to lead him to a chair.

"No, no, leave me alone," cried Stephen in an agony, flinging himself on the ground.

There he lay for hours, never once lifting up his face. Blanche, who had wept violently the whole day, had now cried herself asleep.

Kate Bryan once crept to his side, and whispered some comforting words in his ear; but he did not notice her: he never looked up. Then she, in true Irish fashion, uttered wild cries, and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Pritchard took her away

and shut the door on her in her own room, that this "keening" might not reach the ears of the mourners.

So the night wore on. Day appoached, heralded in the east by crimson fires; bearing away on the morning breeze night's shadows.

In the bright red dawn, Maud, ghostly white in the face, came.

"Do not mourn thus, Stephen."

He uttered a deep groan. She stood there holding some wine, which she stooped to give him; but her hand trembled so, that most was spilt.

"Oh, Maud, my father! my dear father! oh, God help me!"

"God *will* help you, Stephen."

"I killed him! I know I did: oh, to think that he is dead—dead!"

"Drink this wine—you need it—you are worn out, Stephen."

She made him drink what remained in the glass.

"Tell me, Maud, when—it happened. I can bear to hear it from you. Oh, I am so wretched!" (Here another burst of grief.)

"Last night!" She placed her hand on his arm, as he went on,

"I killed him! I killed him!"

"No, no," she whispered. "Take comfort, Stephen; he is at rest."

But he only cried, "Oh, God help me!" as he wearily got up.

Stephen's violent distress presently abated; he sat down and drew Maud to his side. "No one can comfort me; no one can ever make me feel anything but miserable," he exclaimed.

"Earthly consolation is powerless. Heavenly will avail, if you ask for it," she said in a low tone; her grief almost choking her.

He took her hand in his: "Tell me—all—all," he faltered.

"It was so peaceful," she whispered.

"Were you here? Did you come before—the end?"

"I came the day after you left, Stephen; I was with him: I sat two nights at his bedside."

"God bless you for it."

He looked at her. It was now broad daylight. She was wan and worn. She urged him to take rest, but needed it far more herself. He never thought of that. No; she must stay now: he could not do without her.

"Why didn't you send sooner, then, Maud?" he presently exclaimed. "Oh, it was cruel, cruel, not."

"We sent, when we knew there was danger."

"Was it sudden to you, too? Oh, Maud, tell me! I am so wretched. You don't feel for me: you can't."

He leant his head on her shoulder and moaned.

"He slept: only slept, Stephen: that alarmed me first of all; and I asked Mammy to tell me if it was real sleep; everybody else thought it was. When she said it was heavy illness, we sent for Dr. Moore, and when he came downstairs, he told Blanche and me the truth. Blanche fainted, and I sent after you, and—and—before the day ended, I knew Godpapa was dying."

She gave way unrestrainedly now. As long as her strength allowed she had been calm; but nature pent up at length burst out, and she wept bitterly.

In her heart she mourned him—equally with Blanche and Stephen. The dreadful shock of his sudden death had almost stunned her; but in striving to support Blanche she had forgotten herself, and when Blanche succumbed, and went into a succession of fainting fits, Maud's self-renouncement made her strong to comfort and sustain. It was her lot to minister to others, and when Stephen again broke into strong sobbing, her paroxysm of crying ceased, and she endeavoured to soothe him.

Presently Mrs. Pritchard, carrying a breakfast-tray, entered; Mary, just dressed, clinging to her skirt. The child had an awed look on her face. Seeing Maud, she ran up and whispered,—

"Oh, Maud, they have put a beautiful white gown on *him*: he is going to Heaven!"

"Nay, Mr. Stephen, don't take on so—nay, don't indeed!" urged Mrs. Pritchard. "You will make yourself ill. You must live after this, please God: suppose you had been master when *she* died, leaving this little thing! Come, sir, take some breakfast: missy will too,—indeed it's your dooty."

She set the tray before them, but the meal remained untasted. Finding that neither would touch a morsel, she insisted on Maud's going to bed, indeed took her there; and Maud, completely worn out, presently fell into a kind of stupor.

And so the squire was dead; and the burial day came. The funeral train reached from Forrestrange to the church, where past generations of the Forresters lay buried; for the squire was beloved far and near, and many true mourners were amongst the vast crowd that followed to his burial; with many others who

came out of respect, and many who came because their neighbours did. And there was a long line of carriages, whose occupiers, arrayed in hat-band and scarf, discussed the affairs of the nation generally, and the affairs of the Forresters particularly. There was a great procession of tenantry—well-to-do farmers mostly—who marvelled at the richness of the silk, and thought how their wives and daughters would prize it; there were phaetons, gigs, dogcarts and vehicles of every description conveying numbers, and people afoot and people on horseback, who chatted one with the other along the road, and wondered whether young Mr. Forrester would be anything like his father, and so forth.

Those who were able to get into the church considered themselves fortunate: even the churchyard could not hold the immense concourse of people.

When the coffin was carried out again to be lowered into the vault near the chancel window there was a great rush and pushing, and those who were able to get a sight of it, read on the plate,—

STEPHEN FORRESTER,
Aged 60 years.

And the young Stephen Forrester was there, bareheaded; and all the women cried when he

covered his ashy face with his hands, as the coffin was lowered to the vault. At last the service was over, the crowd turned, and men, women and children poured out of the churchyard; and the squire was left to his rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONNOMORE FARM.

"There is a kind of character in thy life,
That to the observer, doth thy history
Fully unfold."

Connomore Farm, embedded in a vigorous plantation, with its cleared broad fields extending down the mountain slope to the beach where the sea dashes in ebb and flow, is Kate's home.

Great barns and mighty stacks near tell of the fruitfulness of the farm. Cottages scattered here and there are the dwellings of labourers employed all the year round on the land.

Connomore is a freehold, bought and cultivated to its thriving state by Mrs. Bryan's father; who, strange as it may seem, combined energy with prudence and perseverance, though an Irishman born and bred.

Mrs. Bryan, his daughter—only child, in fact—is Kate's aunt by marriage; Kate's father and Mrs. Bryan's husband being brothers.

Connomore is just outside the park walls of Bryan Mount, which is a grand, decaying, deserted place—monument of a race swept away. Kate's father was one of four sons at Bryan Mount; Mrs. Bryan's husband another.

Being descended of so ancient a stock, the Bryans thought it beneath them to retrench, although their incomes were exhausted, and the mortgages on their lands foreclosed by sordid creditors. The last of the four Bryans we have alluded to, being boys of fine spirit, could not, of course, turn their talents to vulgar use; consequently they lived on their honourable and dishonourable acquaintances—the community generally—who almost to a man in the county were related or allied to Bryan of Bryan Mount.

As these young men one after the other came of age, each retired into seclusion in an abrupt manner, all in turn playing a pleasant little game of hide and seek, but reappearing ere long.

Daniel Bryan, the eldest, Kate's father, was the most delightful gentleman between sea and sea, in the estimation of the ladies.

"Ah, ye should see him in his hunting-shuit; he bates all for illigance and beauty!" said one.

"He's the jewel that shines brightest in a ball-room!" exclaimed another.

"It's his sowl that has the music intirely: ah,

ye should hear him sing a song with his swate voice!" murmured a third.

"So charming, so generous, so handsome, so unfortunate!" thought Margaret Forrester; and Daniel Bryan ran away with her from the watering-place where they accidentally met.

Now, when it became known that Dan—dashing Dan, as he was familiarly called—had run away with and actually married a young English lady, female friends, acquaintances and cousins became convulsed, and hysterical weepings took place over sundry gifts and cherished curls of hair carefully hidden in silver paper; each fair one believing *hers* to be the only specimen of the false Dan's flowing locks.

Two or three years passed, the English girl being regarded as a common enemy meantime, when an officer's wife (they were abroad now) eloped with dashing Dan, and Margaret, Squire Forrester's cousin, was left alone in that foreign town shortly after Kate was born.

Dan lived a long time after this *incog.* at Bryan Mount, and finally died from rheumatic fever, caught in a ditch where he lay perdu one night. Then his sister-in-law, Mrs. Bryan, took the child.

Augustus the second son "was moighty foine on horseback shure." He rode the Pride of Kildare

in a steeplechase, and at the last stone fence he and the "Pride" were killed. Gerard, the third, died of drink; and Philip, the fourth and youngest, spent some months in retirement in a government residence. When he went forth again under the Insolvent Debtor's Act, he had exactly sevenpence halfpenny in his pocket, which was all he possessed in the world.

At Connomore, close to Bryan Mount, dwelt John Burke, with his only daughter Grace. He was prosperous and rich. His daughter resembled him in the qualities we have before seen he possessed, and through all the country side she was famous for sense and skill. She had refused many excellent offers, and now people were beginning to set her down as an old maid—that rare condition of human nature in Ireland; when, to the amazement of all, she walked to church with Philip Bryan one day, and came home his wife.

She had been attached to him all her life, but would not marry, as he had often asked her to do, fearing his unsteadiness. But now, having returned a sad, humbled man, and living in solitude at the ruinous old place for a while; then determining to apply to some business, and acting up to this resolution, by seeking the advice and support of clever John Burke, and gaining practical know-

ledge from him: now, I say, seeing this, Grace changed altogether, so the neighbours said, and forgetting her characteristic sagacity, married him.

His grand relations cut him at once. "Philip Bryan to marry a farmer's daughter!" Such a mésalliance was terrible for a Bryan of Bryan-Mount. However, Philip, not taking this to heart, became an active, cautious man. Old John Burke left everything to his daughter and son-in-law, when full of years he died. Connomore was enlarged, and Philip and his wife settled down here permanently. A small Philip came, who grew into a great sturdy boy, before his father, commanding the young Philip to love, honour, and obey his mother above all else in the world, died in his comfortable home of Connomore.

Mr. Bryan was well off, and Philip had a good education, but was for ever playing truant and taking short sea voyages. At his home above the sea, love of the ocean came with the breath he inhaled, and all his boyish pleasures were derived from the beach and fishing boats. When he grew older, he much desired to adopt the sea as his profession; indeed, he was already an expert young sailor; but his mother having only him, urged him with such warmth to give up a seafaring life and become a landsman, that (especially

as his cousin Kate joined in the entreaty) he acceded, and articled himself to Dr. Connor, the medical magnate of the neighbourhood.

* * * * *

Mrs. Bryan now often began to wish her husband's niece, Kate, had not been so pretty, or that she had been different in character, or that she had not lived at Connomore; but here she was, lovely, bewitching, careless and useless, capricious and reckless.

Her bright hazel eyes, liquid and lustrous, lit up with mirth, tenderness or passion, as the case might be, would have penetrated more insensible natures than Philip's. And Mrs. Bryan, even when most provoked at Kate's innate vanity and folly, could not help acknowledging the power of the girl's beauty; usually concluding a lecture on some daily recurring fault, by kissing the velvety cheek pearled with ready tears.

However severe the lecture, and however overwhelming the consequent grief, within two minutes after smiles would again break into dimples on Kate's soft cheek; and the same fault would again appear, on the first favourable occasion for its development.

In fact Kate was incorrigible. She received reproof excellently, that was all.

"It was of no more use speaking to her, than

pelting with pebbles a sandbank you wished removed," said her aunt, one day.

Mrs. Bryan was terribly vexed that Philip should be so much in love with Kate, as he undoubtedly was: the anxious mother would have given one of her eyes for him to be heart free. There were plenty of girls in the neighbourhood equal to her in station, superior far in worth, but only not so pretty and attractive. Any of these she would have chosen for a daughter-in-law before Kate.

Instinctively Philip knew his mother wished him not to care for Kate; this, perhaps, made him care for her all the more. Kate, too, had intuitive knowledge that her aunt did not desire her as a daughter-in-law, and acting in direct opposition to Mrs. Bryan's unexpressed wishes, Kate sought with all her power to fascinate her cousin; and at last secretly promised to become his wife at some future day.

Poor Mrs. Bryan! she might have spared her anxieties and innocent manœuvrings to estrange the two; for this came to pass entirely from other sources.

Kate then went to England to visit her connections, where now we find her.

Kate Bryan wailed the loudest of all on the funeral day at Forrestrange, when the heavy tramp of feet sounded through the house, and the living knew that the dead were being borne away for ever; but before sunset, she was not so very sorry the squire was gone, for he had left her a hundred pounds a year, in consideration, it was stated in the will, that she was his cousin Margaret's child.

She was not sorry he was gone, for other reasons: Forrestrange would be so much pleasanter without him. She had always been in awe of him, and feared him more than ever of late: in his presence she never could be as nice as she wished to Stephen; but now she might behave as charmingly as she knew she had the power of doing. (Here her heart gave a flutter, and she looked at herself in the glass.)

There was nothing in the world to prevent Stephen marrying. How charming to be his wife; and to be mistress of Forrestrange! to drive out, to dress richly, to have a house full of company, parties and balls continually; to go to London for the season, and abroad or to fashionable watering-places every year; to be courted and admired everywhere, and to hear that Mrs. Forrester was the belle wherever she appeared! The vision became bewilderingly

delightful, and she hastened to put on her elegant new mourning and go down into the drawing-room.

There, however, these delicious ideas vanished: Stephen's dejected face put them to flight at once. His subsequent distaste for her society was so evident that no other course was left than to draw her visit to a close. So in a few days she departed, rather sorry that she had written a little time ago to break off her engagement with Philip; but confident in her self-reliance that it would be on again when she chose. Next to Stephen, Philip would be the best match, she knew.

CHAPTER IX.

MAUD AND STEPHEN.

"Oh! many are the storms that roll
Their waters o'er the mind."

ALTHOUGH people may nearly die under a great grief, and never desire to be happy or cheerful again; yet, in spite of themselves, they will recover, if strength and health are vouchsafed them, and—last, though by no means least—fortune.

Stephen and Blanche have suffered acutely; they were bowed to the very earth by their sorrow. Some natures do yield in this way: like willow branches they bend to the storm, and they are laid low; but like willow branches they recover their elasticity and freshness. So these two are beginning "to get over their loss," as the phrase goes.

Everything has taken a proper course: Stephen is the "young squire" and Blanche is well pro-

vided for. Their lot is an enviable one, everybody says.

The oculists do not recommend any operation in Mr. Gwynne's case. They have prescribed a method of treatment, which they hope (so they say) may arrest the progress of the disease. He is to abstain from trying his eyes in any way, and has to wear dark glasses.

He has been low in spirits lately; Maud attributes this to anxiety respecting his sight, which without doubt is rapidly failing. Her time for the last few weeks has been completely taken up in reading to, and writing for him; he having been forbidden to do either himself.

There have been several letters from his lawyer Mr. Rolands, which to Maud were a dead language; Mr. Gwynne having laid them aside, reading them and answering them when in his own room, unknown to her.

Yesterday, Mr. Rolands spent the whole morning with Mr. Gwynne, who has been more dejected than ever since.

To-day, Maud has been reading to her father until she is hoarse; he makes no remarks on this, or on the book which she has just closed, but rising from his chair, takes two or three turns up and down the room: he then stops and asks,

"Maud, can you bear a shock? Can you bear to hear bad news?"

She looks up quickly.

"What is it, papa? you are not ill?"

"Oh, no: I eat and drink sufficiently; my health is good."

"Then don't keep me in suspense: what is this bad news?"

"The lawsuit, my dear, has gone dead against me."

"What lawsuit? I didn't know you were engaged in one."

"No! But when I think of it, how could you ——?"

"Tell me about it," she hastily interrupted.

"You will not understand the points of law, Maud; but to make a long story short, I was trustee to Miss Hawke's property; Stanford was the other trustee. Our view of the case was, that only until she was twenty-one was our consent necessary in matters relating to her property. After that age she was free and independent; our signatures only being requisite to legalize any deed necessary in her business transactions. This, too, was Rolands the lawyer's view.

When she was twenty-five, she married Cheetham, you know. Her money was duly settled

on herself: this we urged, though really we had no power to enforce it; and after that we considered ourselves freed from further responsibility. Two years ago—five after she married—her husband induced her to raise her money from the funds and place it elsewhere. I argued with her on the rashness of doing so, and got well abused for my pains by Cheetham, who insisted that interference on our part was illegal: that all we had to do was to give our signatures; which she insisted on, and which she would compel us to do. Accordingly we signed, and heard that they gained considerably by the remove, having found the new investment first-rate, and got a good percentage. Last year the brilliant speculation failed: there was a crash. Mrs. Cheetham lost her money, and then her husband, charging negligence on the part of the trustees, brings an action against them for the whole amount. Is it not monstrous?"

"Oh, papa! Surely no judge could decide against you?"

"But it *is* decided against us: we are condemned in costs and everything. Stanford, who is a poor man, has fled to the Continent, and I—why, I must sell Woodford."

The book she had been reading dropped from her hand.

"Sell Woodford!" she slowly repeated, all colour forsaking her face.

Mr. Gwynne removed his dark glasses, brushed his eyes, and said,—

"Yes, my dear, there is no help for it: I shall only have a miserable income unless I sell."

She was silent for a moment, as if turning the matter over, then asked,—

"What does Mr. Rolands say?"

"He protests against the decision: he urges me to appeal. But how can I, when I have no means, no money? I shall have barely enough to live on, and that little I dare not risk, for in case of failure I should become a pauper; be dependent on Hugh, on his eighty pounds a year curacy perhaps, or end my days in a workhouse."

Here he replaced his glasses.

Maud's pallor was succeeded by a burning flush. Her father continued pacing to and fro.

"There is no help for it," he said to himself; "Woodford must go."

She started up.

"No, no," she cried; "Woodford need not be sold. You have just said you will have *some* little to live on; that will suffice for the present. We will retire to our cottage in Wales, and let Woodford: you will have a high rent, I am certain.

Do not sell—anything but that." She paused, quivering all over with excitement.

"But, Maud——" began her father.

"There are no buts in the case," she proceeded: "I understand it all. Is not this it, papa? Sell, realize, pay the demand, and still there will a comfortable sum of money over; or mortgage, pay high interest, and live on what you can: perhaps not a hundred a year."

"Even so."

"Never mind: struggle on for the present, however, without selling. Who knows how things may change?"

"But, Maud, you have no idea what it is to live in obscurity and poverty; and we must live thus on the little there will be, over and above the interest of money, if I borrow. If I sell and get a good price for Woodford, I can pay the demand claimed, and still retain a comfortable sum."

"Don't sell," she exclaimed with energy. "Were it a just cause for which you parted with your property, I would never say one word against it; but it isn't: I know you are grievously wronged, papa. Keep the place; pay interest on a mortgage for the amount you must now raise, and let us live as we can in Wales."

Mr. Gwynne was much agitated.

"You are a brave girl," he said. "But you

ought to know, in proposing this course, that you will be exiled from all your friends; nay, even be deprived of ordinary comforts, if it be carried out. You, too, will be the greatest sufferer of all: Hugh will be independent; Mary, a mere baby, will know nothing of it; and I—well, I have had my share of this world's good, and must be content."

She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"Papa, don't vex yourself: we shall be quite happy," she said. "Really, now I think of it, living in Wales amongst the mountains will be rather nice than otherwise—don't sell."

So in the course of another hour she arranged with her father that they would go to Hafod, in Craigshire, North Wales, immediately, and that Woodford, with its land and appurtenances, should be advertised "to be let" at once.

Hafod belongs to Mr. Gwynne, and is a remnant left unsold of the great Rhiw estate. When Rhiw came to the hammer in former years, this place, Hafod, being so remote, tempted no purchaser. Here now they are to retire.

Mr. Gwynne, after deciding on this, goes off to Frorn to speak to Mr. Rolands. During his absence, Stephen comes to Woodford.

He has been in the habit of doing this almost daily of late.

"Shall I tell him of papa's loss?" thought Maud. "I think not—it will make him so sorry."

Ignorant Maud! He, and everybody, knew it days ago.

Now Stephen always gave some reason for coming over: he thought it necessary, perhaps; to-day he said,—

"Maud, I walked over with a message from Blanche; she and I are going abroad for a few weeks this autumn, and we want you to come with us: will you?"

"Oh, how nice!" she began; but recollecting her father's pale face—not remembering anything of curtailed circumstances, though; she suddenly dropped her voice, and said, "but I can't leave papa just now."

"Yes, you can—you *must* accompany Blanche."

She remained silent for a minute. Stephen thought that in declining she was actuated by the pecuniary loss Mr. Gwynne had suffered, or was about to suffer. This, however, had not occurred to her; she thought only whether it would be right, or whether she could enjoy herself away from home, while he looked so ill, and while his sight was so bad. Stephen, misunderstanding her silence, rose and stood over where she bent at her drawing (she had taken this in hand when Stephen appeared, for

occupation's sake), stroked her hair as he had done a thousand times before, and said bluntly,—

"Of course you would be at no expense; I shall frank the party: don't hesitate on that score."

At any other time, Maud probably would have laughed, and said, "Very well." Now, suddenly convinced that this would be necessary if she went, she experienced a troubled surprise. Stephen knew then of their coming poverty; doubtless he and Blanche had calculated the expense of taking her: they must pay for her. She worked herself up in the next two or three minutes to such a pitch of pride, that she replied,—

"Thank you, I cannot go with you," and tossed his hand from her head.

"What is the matter, Maud?" asked he wonderingly.

She got up and moved away. She imagined herself stung to the quick. It was all false sentiment, though: false sentiment, and false and foolish pride. She supposed that one of the first consequences of poverty would be to receive favours. She would accept no charity: not she—more especially Stephen's.

All this was very absurd; ridiculous, even. But Maud was by no means a perfect character, and one of those contrary moods which seize on every one at times, causing one to view mankind

through a misanthropical lens, came upon her in full force, as she gave way to these notions.

"Nonsense, Maud! Of course you will go with us: what a queer humour you are in!" he said facetiously. She turned away. "Upon my word if you go on like this, I shall be inclined to treat you as the little girl whom I used to tease on purpose, years ago, to see her in a rage. Do you recollect your angry passions, Maud? Oh! what a little fury it was; flying at me, and beating me with its tiny fists! Then when the passion was over, running to climb my knee, hiding its little face, or putting it up to be kissed." He tried to take her hand; she made a proud movement, all fire and scorn. "Come, Maud, behave as you did in those days: do, my darling."

"Stephen, you are insulting me," she coldly replied.

Stephen was nonplussed; he twirled his chain (it was mended now), and began to grow red in the face. His temper was rising: he said,—

"Oh, you don't wish to go with us: am I to understand that by your declining?"

No reply, beyond a haughty look.

"Just as you choose, of course. You are tired of my society, perhaps; is that it?"

Another proud movement from Maud. Stephen's passion rose to fever heat.

"Oh, that's it, no doubt:—perhaps you think I shall be hopelessly miserable;—I shall not, though—I'm not that sort of fellow, by any means; —ha! ha!" he laughed a short uneasy laugh.

"Reflections respecting your future feelings have not troubled me, I must confess," said Maud, haughtily. "You suggested this moment treating me as a child; I beg I may not be subjected to a foolish, petting manner: a method of treatment seemingly amusing to yourself, but particularly distasteful to me, child though I may be."

"Really," interrupted the other, "I think I had better fly the country. If all the girls of my acquaintance rise up in judgment as you have done, the neighbourhood will get too hot for me; there is hardly a house where some dear thing has not been petted and spoiled in the way you now declare to be so objectionable."

Stephen strode out of the room by the low window, and walked away whistling.

I might devote a page to moralizing on the great effects that often spring from trivial causes, and showing how incidents trifling enough in themselves often involve a chain of consequences, the end of which no human being can foresee. But as I am merely writing a story of life, I will leave the reader to trace out the cause and effect as they appear in this narrative.

CHAPTER X.

MAUD'S REFLECTIONS.

"Tell him, oh, tell him, how I lie oppressed
With the full torments of a troubled mind."

Other visitors presently came; old friends who sympathized regretfully with Mr. Gwynne on his loss, and succeeded in making Maud truly wretched. Was it her father's misfortunes only which affected Maud so deeply this afternoon? Be that as it may, the sympathizing friends departed, impressed with a conviction that she felt the calamity terribly.

Then dinner-time came, when she and her father partook of an unrelished meal; after which she read out to him until bed-time.

How weary she was of this most wretched evening!

After seeing her father to his room, and bidding him good-night, she retired to her own. She longed to be alone, to analyze the pain she

carried at her heart, and which had clutched her when she heard Stephen's whistle dying in the distance. Between the visitors and her father she had had no time to herself since.

"I cannot bear any more talking, indeed," she thought, when Mrs. Pritchard, as usual, came in. However she must endure it, for the old nurse began at once, "Missy, you are not in sorts to-night, I've obsarved."

"Never mind, mammy; I only need rest perhaps."

"You mustn't take things too much to heart, missy. Tut! everything will come right to master again; it's only temp'ry losses: but no thanks to them wicked folk. Don't werrit, my deary."

She brought Maud her dressing-gown.

"Thank you, mammy, you can go now," said Maud.

"Not yet, my deary; I told Susan to bring a hot bath for your feet—that, and a drink of hot elder wine will make you to sleep sound."

"No; I won't have anything to-night."

"Tut! you must; I've not brought you up near eighteen years without knowing what's good for you, missy."

Mammy's panacea for evils generally was hot

water to the feet and hot elder wine (of her own brewing) to the stomach.

Susan appeared in a cloud of steam, bearing the footbath.

Maud is forced to submit; then comes the wine; then Mrs. Pritchard, armed with a hair brush, storms Maud's head.

"That will do," she says, wearily at length. "I am *so* tired; please to go now, mammy. Good-night."

The nurse went. Directly she was in the passage, she said to herself: "Poor dear! she do take master's affairs dreadful to heart: I never saw her look so bad, not even at Forrestrange!"

Maud, to insure solitude, bolted her door, drew a chair to the dressing-table, and sat, supporting her face on her hands, and looking at herself fixedly in the glass; as if contemplation of her face would refresh her memory.

"When did I begin to feel so angry with him? Oh, when he said he would pay for me! In itself that was not so bad perhaps; but it led to so much more. He said he behaved to others as he behaved to me; then, of course, he thinks no more of me than of them. I think he laughed over it too! Perhaps he considers me foolish, giddy. Can human misery exceed what I now suffer? have suffered since! I think

not. . . . . I suppose it was wrong of me to let him pet me and call me his darling, and all that. But I loved him so, and believed all he said. Perhaps all men speak in this way to girls that they can't help seeing are fond of them; only I don't know anything of these matters: when I am older, I may understand things better. Well, I suppose I have been wrong; I scorn myself, and would hate him if I could. Of course he scorns me. I would hide myself if possible, and not let him see me again. He is the same to others!"

Her face was deathly pale; her eyes tearless, but surrounded with dark circles.

"I wish I had never been born," she went on. "What a wretch I am! a miserable, unnatural wretch. Papa's affliction is only as a drop in my sea of misery. Oh, what a selfish girl I am!"

If mammy had seen her now, she would have been alarmed indeed.

"I have often heard that the troubles we bring on ourselves are the hardest to bear," she continued. "All this is my own fault. Stephen is a man; he knows the world; and when he saw that I liked him he amused himself with me. Any other man would do the same I suppose." She clenched her hands nervously. "I could crush myself! my suffering is very, very great.

Oh, why did I ever let him have my hand, or stroke my hair, or pet me in any way! He is just the same to others." Her head ached severely, she felt cold and sick; she began to shudder. "I must lie down now. If I look ill to-morrow, papa will grieve; at least I can hide my wretchedness: indeed, I will try to be remarkably cheerful." Presently she was in bed. "I know what I will do! I will ask papa to let me go to Wales to prepare the cottage by the time he comes; I can then leave the day after to-morrow, and I need not see Stephen again. What is the use of seeing him when he treats others as he treats me?"

The idea of going to Wales afforded some relief; nevertheless, Maud lay awake all night and rose early. Quickly she dressed, and took a sharp walk before breakfast; hoping thereby to feel somewhat refreshed, and get a healthier colour into her cheeks: she succeeded in gaining the desired effect, looking when her father came downstairs, cheerful and blooming.

CHAPTER XI.

STEPHEN.

"Oh! we are querulous creatures!"

STEPHEN, on quitting Maud, sauntered homewards by the meadows. When he reached the wooden bridge he came to a standstill: his hot temper had abated.

"What can the young squoire be adoin' of hisself? He 'ave bin standin' on the bridge ever sich a time," remarked some labourers, who were piling up on a waggon the last corn sheaves in a neighbouring field.

Stephen's reflections were not very deep, if one might judge from externals, for every now and then he whistled snatches of opera airs.

His thoughts were something in this train: "Certainly I never saw a woman like Maud in my life. What the deuce was the matter with her today? The fact is she's spoiled: she is clever, but for all that she ought not to show contempt

for others—it's too bad of her, by Jove! How proud she looked just now! Yes, it was a good hit to say I petted other children—I saw she took it. How handsome she looked though, when I tried to bring her down a peg! I succeeded without doubt. I know women pretty well: it spoils them to pay them too much attention. They think they can treat fellows that constantly dangle after them, just as they like. I suppose I have bothered her lately; but for the life of me I could not stay away from her. Yes, I know women pretty well. I suppose she is going to treat me coldly and that sort of thing, now. Oh, by Jove, I won't stand it. Confound it! I won't be bamboozled any more. She shall understand me, and I must understand her—I cannot go on like this, it tries me horridly."

He strode away, the wooden bridge shaking under his energetic steps. He stopped again at the bottom of the hill and soliloquized, "I mustn't make a fool of myself, though: I will show her that I can live without her, and then perhaps she will be kinder when I see her next. I won't go to Woodford for some time: can I keep away this week?"

With which laudable endeavour strong upon him, he turned up through the wood and went home by the stables.

At dinner he pronounced, "Blanche, this salmon is boiled to rags—the cooking is getting abominable."

"You kept dinner waiting so long," urged Blanche.

"Beastly stuff! what is it?" he asked, on tasting the contents of a side dish handed to him presently.

"I don't exactly know, Stephen."

"Then you ought to know: don't you order dinner?"

Silence, during which Blanche thought him remarkably cross.

"Is this roast beef? it looks more like mahogany than anything else; tasteless as chips, I'll be bound."

"Certainly it is overdone, owing to your being late, Stephen."

He growled, and continued his dinner in silence, until a brace of grouse came on, when he exclaimed,—

"Take them away! burnt up to nothing—spoilt, uneatable."

"Be so kind as to cut me a wing, first," said Blanche.

He did so with the worst grace imaginable.

Everything was wrong: the fruit at dessert was unripe, or over-ripe, the gardener did not under-

stand his business; the housekeeper was abominably careless, Jack the greatest donkey under the sun, and affairs generally at sixes and sevens.

In the drawing-room, when tea was brought, he wondered how Blanche could drink such nasty stuff—he wouldn't have any, not he. Then he paced the floor, fuming at the heat of the room; it was that confounded urn steaming away which made it so hot. Before the urn was brought, he had asked why there was no fire in the grate, the rain made the evening so deuced chilly.

"Fan," a small black and tan terrier, begging on her hind legs near the tea-table, with her mutilated appendage called a tail sticking out, Stephen accidentally trod on it, and the dog yelped.

"You brute, why do you get under people's legs then? out of the way with you," cried Stephen, and kicked her to a corner, where she lay yelping. Directly after he took her up, patted and fondled the trembling dog, and forthwith Fan was fed with all the cake found on Blanche's table.

"I declare you've the oddest temper, Stephen," said Blanche, tartly: "One moment you fly into a rage, and half kill a poor animal; the next, you caress and spoil it. It's the same with you in everything: if you marry, I don't know how your wife will put up with such hastiness."

"Marry! wife! no, thank you; I'm not going

to be bored with more women than I can help," he interrupted.

"You are complimentary," she broke in. "I wonder what Maud would say."

"Say? what the deuce is it to me?"

Blanche glanced at him quickly; here, then, was the cause of his ill-humour: evidently he had fallen out with Maud. Only yesterday, he told Blanche that as soon as he had taken his degree at Oxford, he would think of marrying; for if a fellow wished to take care of his property, and settle steadily, he had far better marry: it was the best state for a country gentleman.

Most true is it that none of us know our capabilities either for good or bad. Unthought-of circumstances arise; seed latent within us, perhaps unknown, unsuspected, suddenly springs into growth, and in a state of things favourable to its development the fruit appears, first in thoughts which, should they be unchecked, speedily ripen into action; and in an hour, a day, a week, we do deeds we should have deemed ourselves incapable of an hour, a day, a week ago. Now if some one had told Blanche she would one day play false to Maud Gwynne, most likely she would have felt intensely indignant, and scouted the idea. No sooner, however, did she imagine that Stephen and Maud had

quarrelled, than she determined on doing nothing to bring them together again.

It struck her at this moment that Stephen might do so much better than marry Maud. Certainly a match here, would, to say the least, be undesirable, now that Mr. Gwynne had lost so much money, and must in all probability part with Woodford, and live goodness knew where—perhaps out of the pale of good society altogether. Why, Stephen with his personal and worldly advantages, and come of an ancient family, might mate with any woman in England. How strange that she had not thought of this before; but somehow, Maud having been such a pet of her father's (the squire), and Stephen, too, being so attached to her (except, indeed, when he fell off in attention during that time Kate was at Forrestrange this summer), the notion of separating the two had not occurred to her (Blanche) before now.

Decidedly, all should be at an end between them: she did not suppose any engagement existed—fortunately, most fortunately. Certainly, then, he would only have to cease paying attention, and the affair would drop. But how was this to be managed? Plans to accomplish it were matured in her mind that night, while Maud, as we have seen, lay sleepless in her bedroom at Woodford.

Stephen, meanwhile, owing to the rain which fell in torrents, confined his smoking to the precincts of the den. He had applied himself to smoking (not cigars, the only orthodox style recorded in a book, but vulgar bird's-eye, from a short black pipe) this evening for the first time for an age. He filled his pipe again and again.

"Hang it," he muttered, relighting it for the fifth or sixth time. "If I go to bed I can't sleep: it's horrid to lie awake tossing and turning half the night. It was too bad of Maud to bother me so much to-day. Of course she is fast asleep caring nothing about it: she doesn't know what it is to have deep feelings—such as mine, for instance. Were she to change places with me for five minutes, she wouldn't tease me after. Don't I love her! If she were my wife—oh, by Jove, my wife! wouldn't I be happy, that's all! I should be a kind of king in this place; my tenants would look up to me; I—that is, we—should be respected far and near. I confess I like that sort of thing, there is something so jolly in it. Deuce take this pipe, it is out again." He refilled it and puffed away. "Now that I think of it, Maud is behaving very badly. I will keep away for a day or two, and then she will come round. She deserves a slight, and she shall have it."

Stephen had now smoked himself into a morbid state, so we will not pursue his reflections farther, but simply add that some time during the small hours he went to bed and slept remarkably well.

CHAPTER XII.

BLANCHE'S WORDS ANSWER THE PURPOSE.

"Stranger, henceforth be warned! and know that pride,
Howe'er disguised in his own majesty,
Is littleness——"

The rain ceased in the night; low hanging clouds and a south wind, however, did not betoken fine weather when the morning broke, and when Maud rose unrefreshed from her sleepless bed, the river was flooded, and thundered past the weir in a discoloured, purple torrent.

It was yet an early hour when Maud returned from her walk, just at the time Stephen had got up and dressed.

"Capital day for fishing," he exclaimed, after breakfast; "the river is full, and there is a good breeze: I shall get some sport, I expect."

"Oh," replied Blanche, "I was going to ask you to drive me over to Frorn to-day, there are several visits we ought to pay in that neighbourhood."

"Not I, when the river is in such capital order."

"That means," said Blanche, elevating her brows, "you can't live one day without going to Woodford, whether they are glad to see you or not."

"What makes you say that?" asked Stephen, angrily.

"Oh, I have my reasons," nonchalantly replied Blanche, going out of the room.

Blanche was correct in surmising that Stephen intended going to Woodford; he had planned it all while dressing. The day was made for fishing, and he would go to the river: doubtless in the pool below the weir he should hook a fine fish. Perhaps Mr. Gwynne might come down—he usually did so every morning—and then he (Stephen) would return with him; so the visit would be purely accidental as it were, and he should see Maud without giving her room to think he had gone purposely to see her. But when Blanche left now, his pride was roused: her words stung—had the effect desired, in fact.

Stephen rang the bell. "Bring me a tankard of beer," he said to the servant. It was brought, a great silver tankard full, foaming at the top; at one draught he drained it, and set it down empty.

"Sykes," he said, "get my rod and landing net, and follow me to the river. Here, fill this flask with brandy."

He marched to his den to get his tackle, and while selecting flies, shouted to Sykes to bring another tankard of ale, which went the way of the other. Then pocketing the flask, he went down to the river, followed by the faithful Sykes.

The stream was rapidly rushing past the sedgy banks and by the high gravel beds; the ground was sodden, and the weeds and long rank grass lay in wet masses. Leaning on the rail of the bridge, Stephen got his rod out, Bob running the line through the rings; the flies were presently arranged, and Stephen threw his tackle well on the pool. A ripple comes up the water: "There! a rise: by Jove, he is fast!" Away went his line, but away went the fish too; for catching in a tree root the tackle broke, and the salmon, with the hook in his lip, broke away.

Stephen, anathematizing the tree, set to work to repair the disaster. The breeze continued, and he dropped the flies on the ripples again; but no success attended his skill: doubtless the fish have been disturbed, and will not venture out of their deep retreats under the overhanging banks and roots. Stephen reeled his lines, shouldered his rod, and walked on up towards

the weir. There is a shower coming: it looks dark to the south, and the wind soughs in the trees.

"Bad weather coming, sir," says Sykes, who does not admire the prospect of getting wet.

"I don't mind; I will fish the weir pool: then go round by the village. I am sure of sport either at the bridge or weir."

Down comes the rain; it pours heavily for ten minutes, then clears up. The wind falls, and the sun shines between the dispersing clouds. It is just twelve o'clock and there is every prospect of a fine afternoon; they reach the weir, where the water foams over the dark piles, and falls into a deep pool, eddying and circling to the banks on either side.

Just at the bottom of the swift flowing current, where it begins to subside into stillness, Stephen gently throws his line; it floats down to the end of the rapid without a rise; he takes it up and throws again, and a ripple circles just on the edge of the stiller water. "Ah, there he is," exclaims Stephen, as he throws his line on the spot. "See —I have got him!"

The rod bends, the reel runs; but there is a check: ah—the salmon goes down! now he is up again. Give him plenty of line and let him go—follow on the bank: he is a fine fellow and enormously strong. Keep him from the reeds if

you can—that's it—he strikes for the gravelly bed away there; the very place to land him. Keep your rod firm—give him more line—play him—he is off—more line still—there, he is exhausted! No—he plunges again—drown him: ah, his struggles are less violent. Reel up—this gravel is the very place to land him on; but be careful—he lashes the water—now draw him—gently, gently. Away he goes—line again—reel up—here he comes—"Sykes, into the water with the landing net." In another moment a salmon of ten pounds weight is on the gravel.

"What a noble fellow!" cries Stephen.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouts Sykes, hugging the fish. "Oh, what a splenderifirous creetur."

The salmon gives a great lash with his tail in Bob's ardent face, who lets go suddenly.

Stephen without more ado spears the fish dead, and takes a long pull at the brandy-flask.

"Bob," he says, "carry this fish up to Woodford with my compliments, and say——"

"Mr. Gwynne is coming down the avenue, sir; maybe he'd like to see the salmon here on the grass," replied Bob, who regarded the fish with mingled awe and admiration.

Stephen turned to look. Yes, there was Mr. Gwynne approaching, with little Mary in his hand.

"Any sport?" demanded Mr. Gwynne, coming up.

"Capital, I have just landed this fine fellow—I hope you will accept him; I was just telling Bob to bring him up."

"Excellent! Capital!" exclaimed Mr. Gwynne. "But carry your sport home, we have more fish than we know what to do with."

"This is a big, big salmon," observed Mary. "Shall I fetch Maud to see it?"

"Will you come and have lunch?" asked Mr. Gwynne.

"I think not to-day; I am wet and not fit to make an appearance," said Stephen; nevertheless he was dying to go, and hoping Mr. Gwynne would press the point.

"Ah, well," replied Mr. Gwynne, "you are very wet, I see; you'd better make haste home to change."

"Papa, it is a very big salmon," remarked Mary again. "Maud would like to see it."

"Come, little one," said Mr. Gwynne, disregarding her remarks. "The ground is damp, and we shall get ague standing here in this hot sun, which draws the moisture up, like a mist; come along. Good morning, Stephen."

Away they trudged through the wet grass.

Blanche's words recurred to Stephen. "Trifles

light as air" confirmed what she said: "Evidently he was not desired at Woodford." How desperately irritated he felt! Meanwhile Mr. Gwynne, unconscious of having given pain, walked with his little girl back to luncheon, and told Maud that Stephen Forrester did not seem disposed to come up; that he was too wet, but had had capital sport. Mr. Gwynne commented at some length on Stephen's prowess generally, with sundry remarks on his being a true Forrester: all of which observations doubtless had the effect of alienating him further from Maud's mind, and tended to soothe and tranquillize her.

Stephen proceeded up the river past the weir, and where the branches and foliage of great trees overshadowed the stream, which flowed broad, deep and still, by brambles and brushwood, clusters of water-lilies, groups of sedges, tall reeds and water plants.

He went by the smooth water now dark and turbid, without stopping, and presently emerged from the wood, on broad fields, dotted indeed with occasional oaks and beeches, but clear at the river's edge; and walked along, until he came to an old stone bridge which spanned the stream.

Underneath the arches the river rushed from higher ground beyond, and glided into an ex-

panded pool, where Stephen once more set to work. Scarcely had he thrown his line, when a voice from the parapet of the bridge, shouted,

"Forrester, by the powers!"

Although these were the only words, none but a native of Erin's isle could have uttered them.

Stephen looked up and beheld one of his college friends seated on the parapet, with his legs dangling over.

"By the powers!" shouted the little, jolly looking Hibernian.

"O'Neil! as I'm a living man," exclaimed Stephen. "Why, O'Neil, whence come ye?" he shouted, reeling up his line, and hastening to meet his friend.

"Faith, you may well ask that," replied O'Neil as they met; "it is meself that hardly knows. Come up to this near village, and at a little place which is called the Forrester Bugle Horn (because it's your coat of arms, I suppose), you will find Stayner, Thornton, and Miller, and meself. We are tired to death, and going to remain the day for rest; we are walking slap through England for fun: whence we came, or where we go, is beyond me geography to say."

Stephen delivered over his rod to Sykes, and, directing his servant to carry the fish to the

village inn, proposed to O'Neil to have it cooked at once, for he was deuced hungry.

"And is this elegant salmon your own, Forrester? You never caught it yourself entirely."

"I did; just now: I crimped it, too, with the spear at the end of my rod. I say, let's have it now; afterwards we will go up to the house, and dine again if you like."

"We'll see about that when this beautiful fish is conshumed. It is great good luck to have found you, and no mistake."

Whether O'Neil apostrophized the salmon or Stephen, it is hard to say.

They walked to the village, where the first thing they beheld was Sykes at the inn door, grasping the head of the salmon, while a tall powerful young man had seized the tail part and was trying to get it into his own possession, offering to fight the man there and then for the fish.

"Halloa!" he exclaimed on seeing Stephen. "Why, is it you, Forrester?"

"I say, arn't you a fine fellow," said Stephen, laughing and shaking hands.

"Wonders never cease. I never dreamt of encountering a comrade in these parts: I thought you vegetated farther south than this. My good fellow, you are wet; I've lots of dry things in

my knapsack; change, and let's improve the occasion, by rejoicing over that salmon."

"A glass of whisky would keep the cold off," suggested O'Neil.

"So it would," echoed Stephen.

The fish was deposited in the kitchen, dinner ordered in an hour's time, and Sykes sent off for dry things for his master, and for sundry other articles, which in general opinion would materially add to the enjoyment of the feast; for this being only a small village inn, wine was not kept thereat.

What a stewing and rushing and cooking there was in the kitchen. For mere "walking gentlemen," Mrs. Jobbes the landlady never would have taken so much pains; but when she found they were friends of Mr. Stephen, her anxieties to prove herself equal to providing a sumptuous entertainment knew no bounds: especially as he was going to dine with them.

All hands in and about the house were pressed into the service, and Jobbes disappearing for a short period, gave cause for suspicion that he was put to scrape the potatoes; the only part of domestic cookery at which he was *au fait.*

The best parlour of the clean inn presently resounded with merriment. The young gentlemen had good appetites, and the salmon, hard

and curdy, pink and flakey, disappeared rapidly, only a very small portion of the tail being left.

"I say, O'Neil, what's the best thing to settle the stomach?" asked Thornton.

"This same," replied O'Neil, pouring out a glass of Cognac, and swallowing it. "Me dear Thornton, try," he continued, as he set the glass down empty; "faith, 'tis the finest thing aloive."

Each seemed impressed with the necessity of keeping the salmon down, and each followed O'Neil's example. Then came a great piece of roast beef, which after it had been duly discussed, was declared so rich that more Cognac was necessary. With cheese, the bitter beer was found so excellent, that a further supply was necessary, and a fresh tap brought, which was considered even better than the other, and more demanded.

"Faith, can't ye bring it in a wash-hand jug to save trouble," shouted O'Neil.

This vanished like the other, and when the table was cleared, fruit and wine from the hall placed thereon, the party presented a highly convivial appearance, to speak mildly.

Imagine them, talking, laughing, and no one listening, when the landlord, having deposed Sykes, appeared bearing a large china bowl of punch, on the concoction of which he much prided him-

self. A loud hurrah greeted his entrance; he was voted the best host in the world, and a general demand for tumblers ensued, wine-glasses being reckoned slow. Then pipes were produced, and the atmosphere of the room speedily became one cloud of tobacco smoke. Each became hilarious for a season, and songs were sung and drowned in doubtful choruses, or overpowered with roars of laughter. O'Neil blundered hugely, and was the butt of the company, and the din grew tremendous. At last the landlord came in, humbly begging pardon for intruding, but pleading that perhaps the gentlemen were not aware it was late and time to close the house.

Stephen laughed and said,—

"Yesh, Jobbes, old fellow; take them all up shtairs: I'll shleep here too," and preceding the rest, he went into the first room he could find, and presently snored.

That very day Blanche had resolved on her course of action. She had begun by insinuating that Stephen's society was not desired at Woodford; now she determined to induce him to drive her to see some friends at a distance, a visit which would involve their being a night or two away; then, if on her representations he did not cease in his attentions to Maud, Blanche would invite two or three pretty girls whom she knew to stay in the

house; not doubting that her brother would begin a flirtation with one, in which case Maud would herself draw back and have nothing to say to him. Blanche knew Maud well enough to guess this would be the result, if he behaved as he had done while Kate was at Forrestrange.

Blanche avowed to herself that she had the most intense regard for Maud, and would show her every kindness on earth; but for Stephen to marry badly—to marry her—oh, it was against common sense and sisterly feeling to desire it!

When Blanche saw Stephen go down to the river, she feared that he would go to Woodford, and sat in bitterness the whole morning; but when Sykes came back for dry things, and mentioned that his master was at the village and going to dine with four young gentlemen who happened to be passing through, her relief was great. It mattered not that he never returned at night—not a bit: she had gained her point for that day; for she understood from the servant Stephen had not been to Woodford. Anything—anything to break *that* off: her desires at present tended only to this end.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SEA-SIDE.

"Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea! "

STEPHEN, when he awoke next morning, was amazed to find himself in the narrow cramped room of the Bugle Horn; but his splitting headache explained matters sufficiently without the necessity of further inquiry. O'Neil was the only one of the party who looked and professed to be fresh; the rest were all, to use their own expression, uncommonly seedy. Neither remembered or knew distinctly what accident had befallen the clock, whose smashed face gave evidence of *something;* but O'Neil had a glimmering idea of an encounter with a moon-faced giant, whose measured, persistent accents resembled the ticking of a pendulum: his hand, too, was cut; but as this was unobserved he wisely kept to himself an hypothesis which dawned upon his recollection during the course of breakfast;

going off, however, into fits of laughter, the cause of which his friends, who were rather blue, could not divine.

After sundry bottles of soda-water and various draughts of bitter beer, the walking party set out on their tour again, and Stephen returned home; where he, suffering from the effects of last night and feeling out of sorts and penitent, and Blanche being in high good-humour and receiving him graciously, acceded without demur to her proposition of paying this planned visit. They went, and were absent three days.

The morning succeeding their return, he declared he must call at Woodford; Blanche said she wished to do the same thing; so she accompanied him down the woodland path, over the wooden bridge, and across the meadows; to his secret dissatisfaction, for he was longing with all his heart to see Maud, and to see her alone, which with Blanche for a companion he could not.

It was a clear, bright autumn day, and the woods were gorgeous in colour; the sunshine still casting a glory over dun stubble-fields, and brightening into almost spring greenness the late after-grass. But the day, beyond its being fine and pleasant for walking, and the scenery, were unnoticed by Blanche and Stephen, who both were preoccupied by their own thoughts; the former considering

how she might break up the arrangement of going abroad, which she believed had been settled; and the latter preparing a mental drama, in which he and Maud were the only actors.

However, there was not much likelihood of the play being acted further, for on arriving at Woodford they found Maud was gone to Wales, whither Mr. Gwynne and the rest were soon to follow.

For a moment, when Blanche heard this, her heart relented, and a sharp pang of self-accusation shot through her; but she speedily argued her tenderer feelings down, and her previous frame of mind returned. Without doubt all was for the best; they were separated without interference, at any rate palpable interference, on her part.

As to Stephen he was excessively unhappy; one instant determining to follow Maud and make it up with her; the next secretly heaping up reproaches upon her, and accusing her of having regularly jilted him, and vowing not to trouble himself more about her.

But after the lapse of two days, during which these conflicting ideas pressed on him alternately, a middle course occurred to him. He would write to her; not by any means a love-letter, but an ordinary note to which she must reply, and then he would see about it.

What a queer old place is this Hafod! Uninhabited for years, most of the house is decayed, damp, and mouldy.

Maud's heart sank at the smell of the close, mildewed rooms, when she first came: and then the long windy passages; her candle is invariably blown out as she traverses the crooked staircase. Maud thought it a charming old place when she was here some time back. But they came to rough it then, and there was comfortable Woodford to return to directly the weather got bad, and there were plenty of servants at Hafod, imparting life and cheerfulness to the dreary old house. Now there will only be cook and Susan, with Mrs. Pritchard, of course; and Maud cannot help thinking the vault-like kitchen and dark low rooms will be dismal indeed during the coming winter. She keeps her thoughts to herself, however, and directs Susan in the arrangement of everything; working herself to expedite matters, that a semblance of cheerfulness may pervade the place by the time her father comes.

There is a farm attached, but this has been taken by a farmer some distance off.

Hafod stands above the sea, close upon the shore. How the waves thundered that night! The house quite vibrated to the shock, when at high tide the water beat against the shingle.

Maud got up to the window more than once, feeling desolate and nervous in that lonesome place: there was only the white surf breaking through the darkness.

The curtains rustled and flapped so that her sleep was disturbed, and when pale, heavy morning broke, she rose wearily. To see the gray coast, black boulder stones, wan gleaming sands, lowering sky, and the dreary waste of waters, was a prospect anything but cheering. When the raw wind stirred the masses of night clouds, a colourless sickly light broke on the horizon, which was reflected in gleams of pale light on the weltering sea, and a chill, overcast day came on, during which she felt joyless and dispirited indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAUD TRIES TO CONQUER SELF.

"Oh, tell him, tell him that he loves in jest!
But I in earnest."

TOWARDS noon one of the farm-people who had been to Carrag Market with a basket of butter, brought her letters from the post. There was one from her father which mentioned that Woodford was already let; it had been taken immediately by a Mr. De Lille, who was anxious to enter into occupation as soon as possible. And there was one from Stephen. This was it:—

"MY DEAR MAUD,

"How sly of you to run away without saying a word to any one! I was astonished to find you gone, on our return from ——shire. Had I been aware of your leaving I should have tried to come back before (though, my dear, I must tell you there was an uncommon pretty girl

where we were at, whose *parient*, by the by, wants to take, or indeed has taken, Woodford) to say good-bye — if indeed you would have condescended to shake hands with a poor creature that you treated with such scorn the last time he ventured into your presence! But a truce to joking. Blanche says she will not go abroad now; if not, don't marvel to see me one fine day. I hear there is capital fishing in Craigshire; perhaps you will tell me all about it, for when the season comes round again I should like to have a week amongst the mountains. Some one told me that early in November char is caught freely in a pool near Hafod. Is this so? However, I am off for a week's grouse-shooting— I hope to send Mr. Gwynne a basket. He joins you shortly, I believe. Should I come down (I shall be a brave fellow to do so!) I trust to find you more amiable than when we parted—I can't help laughing at the recollection of our tiff. I'm a shocking correspondent, and never know what to say next; so I shall stop.

"Believe me, yours very sincerely (affectionately, I was going to put),

"STEPHEN FORRESTER."

Maud read the letter, and sat down to think over it. She said to herself, "Yes, I see how it

is: he can laugh at what even now pains me to think of: he turns everything into joke. He *cannot* care for me, therefore it is better I should neither see him nor hear from him again; and it will only add to my unhappiness if he writes: he cannot understand my feelings, or if he did he would only laugh. It is despicable to pine about him, or to cherish his memory; I must try and forget him, and be up and doing. I don't know what will become of us if I nourish a secret grief. I will bestir and not give way to thoughts of him; for I plainly see I am only, to him, as other girls are. He said he treated others just in the same way."

So she threw the note into the fire, and there was an end of the matter; and she set about business, and tired herself well in the hopes of being able to sleep soundly at night: for when others slept, intolerable feelings of misery would rush over her, and she would cry half the night through.

It is well, perhaps, for once that Mr. Gwynne's sight is imperfect, otherwise her wan face would alarm him when he comes, and Woodford would be sold at once, for Maud to leave this dreary Hafod. However he sees nothing of it, and she meets him in seemingly good spirits, and takes him over the house, pointing out the improvements that have been effected, and is so lively

that he almost thinks the sea air agrees remarkably well with her.

The autumn waned into winter. Maud took her father out most days: I say *took him*, for if left to himself he would never stir from the old parlour; the roads were so wet, and the way to the beach so shingly that he could not enjoy walking, he said. But Maud obviated this, by having a path cleared to the shingle, and getting a pair of strong country shoes for him, which she herself laced up on his feet, and so induced him to take exercise in this way. The scenery gets to look more dreary still; the yellow and brown leaves strew the ground where there is wood, and the night frosts have changed the green hillside to sere dun.

"Oh, it will be better," says Maud, "when winter is *quite* set in."

Cook has given notice. "Much as she respect the family, she can't abear to stay no longer in sich a place." Susan is fired with ambition and requests to be allowed to succeed cook. Susan turns out excellently, and she and Mrs. Pritchard are the only domestics.

The winter sweeps over the country with a high, bitter north wind, and a fall of snow, and the roads and paths become impassable. Maud devotes herself to her father, and reads aloud,

or writes to his dictation, from morning to night. He says his sight is no worse, but Maud knows otherwise. Little Mary is full of life and wild spirits; but since this north wind her poor little fingers have been covered with chilblains: "It is the tarrible cold," mammy says. And terribly cold, too, it is in that draughty old house. Mr. Gwynne seems to feel it less than the others. As for Maud, she cannot help shivering constantly; yet she will have no fire in her bedroom, for coals are very scarce and very dear by the time they are brought to Hafod. Her whole bent now is, to economize—to live within her father's income. They will be better off when Hugh gets independent; for which purpose, he says, he will lose no time after leaving Oxford, but get ordained as soon as he can.

Blanche has written several letters to Maud, and the latter has replied to them; of late, however, the correspondence has slackened, for Maud writes that her life is so monotonous that she has nothing wherewithal to fill up a letter, so Blanche's remain longer and longer unanswered: besides, Hafod is so far from the post; sometimes a week goes by without any of the farm people going to Carrag.

The church is a mile from Hafod, and now the snow has come, there is no possibility of attending,

for the drifts lie many feet deep on the road. Maud is not sorry to stay away to-day; for of late, the service, being in Welsh, has been an utter weariness to her. During the sermon she has unconsciously lapsed into reverie, rousing only when the congregation has risen at the end; and during the blessing feeling very penitent for her stray thoughts: but the same occurred again at the next opportunity.

"There is no possibility of our going to church this afternoon," she says, after the usual early Sunday dinner. "I suppose they had better come in to prayers again."

"Yes; will you read, Maud?" said Mr. Gwynne.

"Melly won't come to prayers aden. Melly had enough this morning," announces that small individual.

However, at three o'clock, when the leaden clouds drive low on the snowy hills, the north wind backing to the west, and roaring up from the sea; tempest raging without, and peace and warmth reigning within the dingy old parlour, Melly, seeing there is nothing more attractive going on, reappears with her doll, which is made to comport itself in an orthodox manner.

When the little household is assembled, Susan asks whether three or four of the boys and girls

from the farm may come in too; they cannot go to their chapel, and have trooped up to Hafod to ask for an English lesson. Permission is granted, and Susan goes to fetch them in.

Nancy Jones, a great tall girl, with a quantity of red hair drawn into a tight knob behind, appears as leader of the rest. Jenny Jones follows, ditto in appearance; then Morris Jones, whose rufus-coloured hair appears in a vast shock. They enter, and Maud reads the service; Susan imparting secret instructions to the uninitiated to mind the curtsey at the creed. After the service is over, Maud will have her Bible class, which she started some Sundays ago: she begins to find pleasure in teaching, now.

It is on the edge of dark. The western wind increases in violence, whistling through the chinks and crannies, and howling down the chimneys. Susan brings candles, and seats herself near the light with the rest. The chapter chosen is the second lesson for the evening service, which Maud has already read out, but which she desires they should understand. They can all read very tolerably, and the chapter is again gone through, verse by verse.

"I want you to understand what you read," says Maud.

"Iss 'm," from the class of girls. From Morris,

"Oh, iss; I want to understand Ingliss by the time I take the cattles with father to England: two language iss a fine thing."

"Well," said Maud; "tell me what this chapter is about?"

Class hurriedly scan the page; each one catching at the words most conspicuous; each one quite wrong. Susan, however, answers, "On Faith."

"True. Can any of you tell me the meaning of faith?"

Dead silence. Maud sought in her mind for an illustration.

"Well, you would all believe me if I said the country I come from is a pleasant country; a nice, beautiful country, would you not?"

"Iss 'm," except from Morris, who replies, "I dennow."

"For shame, Morris," in loud whispers from the class; "in course it's a grand country."

"Iss, it may be for all I know," rejoined Morris, compromising.

"Well," pursued Maud, "it is a rich green country, and a deep river flows past the hay meadows."

"That may be 'm," from Morris.

"It is so. You have never seen the place, but if you believe in it, that is faith."

Bewildered looks.

"Don't you understand? Faith means believing in something you can't see."

"But please 'm, isn't it to be seen quite plain?" from Susan.

"Does they draw the net in the river?" asks Morris, who is given to aquatic pursuits.

Maud is puzzled for an instant. Her illustration has not succeeded; she tries another.

"Now supposing you were all walking along the bank of that river, and I were to tell you there were beautiful fish in it, you would believe it?"

"Dear me, iss 'm?" in a ready chorus.

"You would not *see* the fish, but you would believe they were in the river?"

"Iss, to be sure, 'm."

"Then that would be faith," she went on. "You would believe the fish were there, although for the darkness of the water you might not see them."

"Indeed, treuth, iss."

She paused before proceeding further with the questioning; then reading over the first verse, asked,—

"Now tell me what faith is."

"Fis in a river," from Nancy, Jenny, and Morris,

in a breath. Susan laughed outright, and Mrs. Pritchard cast a look which the class never forgot. Maud, with great patience, went over the same ground again and again, until at last they had a glimmering of her meaning, and she concluded her lesson thus:

"We all want faith. Although our eyes can only see visible things, yet there are things unseen, far more lovely, far more to be desired, than the most glorious and beautiful things we shall ever see on earth. We do not think enough, or care enough for the world we cannot see, but which we are all getting nearer and nearer every day. We want faith to feel it is surely near. If we thought of it as we ought, how carefully we should live, so as in no way to lose happiness in the world to which we are going! Therefore let us ask God to increase our faith, and to strengthen us in hope and charity; then in this world we see, our eyes will not be shut to that other, but we shall look to Jesus, and be patient, and by and by reach the good land, where we shall dwell with Him for ever."

When the lesson was over, and the class gone, Maud withdrew to the window, and sat there silent, watching the night rack in the sky; while the gale tore round the house, and the waves

burst on the shore below. Mr. Gwynne paced the now still room.

"Maud, your voice is very like Hugh's," he said. "Do you know, my dear, I quite enjoyed your class teaching; how long the evening would have been without it!"

The news of her Sunday school spread quickly, and during the ensuing week several other applicants for admission came. This class teaching became one of the most prominent events in her lonely and monotonous life: we can judge how lonely, from an extract of a letter to Blanche, which letter has been owing several weeks:—

"I hardly know how to fill a letter. I have nothing to say, in fact. One day resembles another in point of colour, and what it brings. The hills are covered with snow, and the sea is one uniform grey, unvaried by either shadow or sunlight upon the white breakers which roll on unceasingly.

"You, Blanche, cannot comprehend how monotonous our lives here are. Sometimes a restless fit comes over me, and I feel I cannot bear it; it is so hard to be quiet, for a restless disposition like my own. But time gets on: I was eighteen yesterday! which mammy duly commemorated by a big pudding. I must not be egotistical; though I hardly know what to write about. The

evening class I have, is the only break in our solitude; it interests and amuses papa, who proposed my holding it on week days instead of Sundays, which I began to do, that the young people may learn writing as well. Hugh comes in a few days. How welcome he will be, I leave you to imagine.

"I am glad you find papa's tenants at Woodford pleasant neighbours. The dear old place! I cannot bear to think it should be sold; and Mr. Rolands says with care, it need not. I for one would rather live half my life in seclusion, to save it, for I feel assured one day or other papa will be righted, and then it would be so grievous if Woodford were gone!"

* * * * * *

There was a rapid thaw; discoloured torrents ran down the hill sides and along the mountain roads. This lasted for a day and night, then it cleared to hard frost.

Along the shore, the snow disappeared under a cloudless sky, and the sea became intensely blue; the distant mountains still remained snowcapped, but in the clear frosty sunset, turned to rose. The day passed away in fire, and night came on white and still as death; for the moon came up beyond the snow hills, and changed to ice the purple evening.

"Hugh will be here soon!" exclaimed Maud, when Susan laid the tea-table and lit the candles. "By when may we expect him, papa?"

"By seven: there is the clock striking now, he will be here immediately."

Maud stirred the fire and threw another log on, then ran to the kitchen to consult with Mrs. Pritchard on the propriety of Susan's broiling the chops.

"Maud, I hear a rumble; the car must be coming," called out Mr. Gwynne from the parlour.

Away ran Maud out into the moonlight; yes, there was the car, and here in advance, having walked up the hill, is Hugh. Maud darted upon him, and half choked him, she held his neck so tight; while he kissed her, laughed, and declared he was being strangled.

"Well, my boy, we are right glad you are come," exclaimed Mr. Gwynne. "What a cold journey you must have had! Ah, your hand is almost frozen."

Maud warmed her own hands at the fire, and began to rub Hugh's well. Little Mary, who in virtue of Hugh's arrival has not yet gone to bed, adds her mite to the general welcome, by clambering on a chair and rubbing his head. The supper hot and smoking was brought in, and Maud poured out the tea.

Between the log fire and candles, the old parlour was all in a glow; and Hugh said he never was in a warmer or more comfortable room, and never enjoyed supper more. So they were all happy and cheerful; for Hugh had taken a double first class at Oxford, and now he said he would soon be independent; then of course they would all be better off. And so the evening passed in happiness, and hopes of the future.

Just before going to bed, Hugh said,—

"By the by, Maud, I have a message for you from your old friend Stephen; it was something about your never having replied to some note or other—what, I really forget."

"By the by," said Mr. Gwynne, "his name was not in the list; how was that?"

"He never went in,—that was all," replied Hugh.

"He doesn't read, then?"

"No, very little; but he'll do well when he chooses to stick to his work: he's sure to take a good degree. Last term, though, he did nothing but hunt; he's considered one of the best oars on the river, too: he's in the University eight," said Hugh, in a manner apologizing for Stephen.

"I was wondering what he was about," said Mr. Gwynne. "Blanche never speaks of him in her letters, does she, Maud?"

"No," replied Maud, getting scarlet.

"I have not seen much of him lately," went on Hugh; "the fact is, I worked so hard. I have not his brilliancy; and must wrestle and strive, strive and wrestle and persevere, before I attain anything. I assure you, you don't know how hardly I won success. I had to turn Stephen and all away, and apply industriously and unflaggingly, or I should have been hurled to the bottom of the hill very speedily."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Maud; "you are naturally clever, Hugh."

"No more clever than every other man to whom common ability has been given, and who perseveres steadily in the course he has marked out for himself. Application and perseverance are the chief things, depend upon it, Maud."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Gwynne; "I am afraid Stephen has but very little of either."

"None, or he'd be a first-rate man: whatever he tries he succeeds in, idle though he be. He's a splendid fellow," said Hugh, musingly. "Do you know," addressing his father, "he came into my room one day, and threw down a cheque-book, saying, 'I say, let me be your banker till things come straight,' and then walked out again; and when I looked there were five cheques written for twenty pounds each, to be paid me by his

banker. Of course I didn't take advantage of this, but it was the act of a true friend, was it not?"

The blood rushed in a hot tide to Maud's face again. "Yes," she thought, "Stephen is the noblest and dearest in the world." She was truly glad when her father announced the hour, and they separated for the night. Taking Mary up from the hearthrug where she had fallen asleep, and putting her to bed in the nursery, Maud retired to her cold, draughty bedroom, longing with all her heart to see Stephen once more: she cried bitterly half the night through.

CHAPTER XV.

CHANGE OF AIR AND SCENE.

"But eye and lip will regain their light,
For clouds of sorrow pass over the young
Like morning dew upon flow'rets flung."

HUGH had become very pale; his broad white forehead was scarcely whiter than his cheek. In his countenance there mingled with its natural expression of gravity a sadness which Maud never observed before, at least so she thought: the light in his dark eyes was subdued, too; altogether he was changed, and she attributed it to hard reading and keeping close. At breakfast, as she was observing this, he suddenly asked,—

"How is your evening-school getting on, Maud?"

"Very well indeed; about eighteen come regularly."

"I am glad to hear it; I highly approve of these things. If I live to be a clergyman I shall do all I can to further this kind of work: the

Church wants vitality amongst her members. You, Maud, as one of her children, do well to give up some portion of your time to your poorer sisters——"

"And brothers," interrupted Maud.

Hugh went on, regardless of the interruption, his eyes beaming with fervour,—

"A day will come—nay, cannot be far distant—when men and women in the Church will rouse from their apathy, and go forth to fight under Christ's banner as His soldiers and servants; then sisterhoods of purity and goodness will be found, who by their lovely, angel-like example will show what women of the Church—the Church of England—can be. Courage, Maud! this little band of yours may become a holy sisterhood, given to all good works."

He rose from his seat with a fervid expression of enthusiasm on his face.

"That cannot be," replied Maud; "at least, we cannot be what you call a sisterhood, for in the class there are five cow-boys."

"Are there?"

He sat down again, the bright expression going.

"Yes, five great boys—quite young men—who come after working-hours. You don't think there is anything out of the way in my teaching them, do you, Hugh?"

"Oh, no, far from it; very good of you to take so much trouble, Maud."

But she saw that the five big boys destroyed the other beautiful idea, so the conversation dropped.

That afternoon there came a letter from Blanche pressing Maud to pay them a visit at Forrest-range during the time Hugh would be at Hafod. It was a long, friendly letter, concluding thus:—

"There is nothing to prevent your coming, I am certain, unless an attraction in the form of a Welsh squire; a form of humanity with which I believe the country abounds. If you refuse coming, I shall lay it down to this. Stephen, who is looking over my shoulder, says so too. I want you to come, Maud; I am particularly anxious you should see our neighbours—your father's tenants. Write and mention which day we may expect you. Kind love to all.

"Yours affectionately,

"BLANCHE FORRESTER."

"You must go, Maud," said Hugh; "the change will benefit you, and bring colour back to your cheeks. You are so pale and thin: I never saw anyone changed as you are."

"Does Maud look ill?" anxiously asked Mr.

Gwynne, removing his blue spectacles, and trying to see her face.

"Oh, she will be all right after a little change: the cold winter has tried her, perhaps," returned Hugh, observing his father's anxiety.

So Maud must go: there was no earthly reason she shouldn't, and there was no excuse to be found. With a strange mixture of anxiety, dread, and anticipation of pleasure, she wrote and accepted the invitation.

Mrs. Pritchard speedily became immersed in the business of turning over Maud's wardrobe and selecting the best dresses.

"'Deed, missy, you had better get a new evening dress," said Mrs. Pritchard, after an elaborate examination; "these is all good, but very short: you do grow so quick, to be sure."

"No, I won't buy anything new; what I have must do: this white worked muslin is as good as new; just look," shaking the dress, and holding it out for inspection.

"Yes, my deary, but there's no more to let out. Haven't you grown so tall during the last half year!"

"Well, it can't be helped," observed Maud, in a resigned way.

"No, my deary; but so far as that goes you needn't mind showing your feet and ankles,

they're the best I ever see, excepting your dear mamma's, which was perfect in shape as a Venus, as I often heard them say," said mammy, consolingly.

"This white one, and that black silk will do very well: I don't intend to stay long. Isn't it quite easy for me to travel alone, mammy? Papa wants me to take you; but how will they manage without you? It is perfectly nonsensical to think I can't take care of myself: and Hugh will see me off, and some of them will meet me; so really there is nothing formidable at all in the journey, is there?"

"No, my deary; only that don't mend matters on them as ought to take care on you."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Well, missy, to tell truth, I think it very short in Mr. Stephen—I beg his pardon, Mr. Forrester—not to fetch you all the way. I remember different things, that I do; but when a cloud comes over people, my deary ——, oh! everything changes," said Mrs. Pritchard, holding up and slapping down the dresses vigorously.

A hot blush came over Maud's face, and the one idea which gave her pleasure vanished. Instead, there crowded notions of how wretched it would all be; how badly dressed and shabby she should look. Indeed she had better remain at

home: she knew she had; but mammy went on packing energetically, and Maud did not say anything, and it had been arranged for her to go.

So when the class assembled this evening, Maud had to tell them of her leaving for a short time; a general "augh" of regret escaped her scholars, who each, however, had an allotted task to be done against her return. After they bid her good-bye, she was on the point of declaring her determination not to go; but she failed, and the day came, and she set off.

The night had long closed in when she arrived at her journey's end. The hatchment was up at Forrestrange; she saw it in the starlight, and the tears filled her eyes as she stepped from the carriage. No one had gone in it to meet her at the station, but now, here is Blanche coming to the doorway. Where is Stephen?

Jack, too, comes in sight and will shake hands (he was Welsh by birth, and has that in him still), then sniffles himself away. The honest creature was half broken-hearted after his master's death, and knows how Maud was loved by him, and remembers all about it.

There was tea ready with every comfort in the large, well-lit drawing-room; and Blanche was all kindness and welcome, greeting Maud with the

utmost warmth, and appearing truly glad she had come. Presently Blanche said,—

"Stephen was so sorry he had an engagement this evening: that is why he didn't meet you, Maud. I am afraid he won't be at home in time to see you to-night."

"I hope I was not the cause of *your* staying at home," said Maud, quickly.

"Oh! I assure you *I* preferred remaining to meet you, so it was my own pleasure I consulted, my dear: I am so glad to see you, Maud," cried Blanche, enthusiastically.

She did not tell Maud that Stephen was kept in ignorance of the day she would arrive until this engagement had been formed; neither did Blanche vouchsafe the information of how unwillingly he had kept to it when he heard Maud was coming.

"Thank you, Blanche," replied Maud, smiling; but feeling in her heart what a fool she had been to come from Hafod.

"You must excuse Stephen for being absent," went on Blanche, "for really it was quite unavoidable. The new room Mr. De Lisle has added to the house at Woodford is opened this evening, and there is a dance ——"

"Is the room finished? There has been a long correspondence with papa on the subject."

"Oh, yes! such a beautiful drawing-room, the largest in the country: when furnished it will be delightful; Miss De Lisle is so elegant in her tastes. She has been abroad all her life, almost."

"Is she the only daughter?"

"Yes; the only child: in fact, she is reputed a great heiress. I want you to see her very much; she is charming."

Maud, not knowing what to say, drank her tea in silence, while Blanche went on pleasantly talking of delightful Miss De Lisle. It seemed that Maud was very tired with her journey, for she grew paler and paler as they sat at the tea table; but as the sound of wheels was heard indistinctly, she flushed to the eyes.

"Surely Stephen cannot be returning already," exclaimed Blanche, as she heard the rumble. "They must have broken up earlier than they expected."

Whether or no, in another moment he was in the room, greeting Maud hilariously. She had never seen him the same in manner before: he was quite boisterous, laughing incessantly, and patting her head as he had done formerly.

"I am so glad you are come, Maud; we shall be so jolly! What are you having, tea? Why don't you give her wine, Blanche? You like tea best, do you? All right; then I'll have some too.

How's your father? How's Hugh? I've seen nothing of him lately. What a lucky fellow he's been! He deserves it, though. Why don't you give me some tea, Blanche?"

And in this strain Stephen went on, until by some accident his cup was upset, when he laughed and vowed it was owing to toasting "Little Woodford" in champagne out of tumblers.

Blanche was perfectly cool and unconcerned; but when, putting his hand on Maud's head again, he declared she must not grow any taller, that she was just right, and "Little Woodford" too small, Blanche suddenly got up, and consulting her watch, found it was high time to go to bed. And when Stephen seized both Maud's hands in bidding good-night, saying,—

"My dear Maud, I am so happy to think you are here again,"

She interrupted him with,—

"You certainly are forgetting yourself, Stephen. I think it rather hard on Maud to be subjected to so violent a manner, because your enthusiasm in drinking Miss De Lisle's health has excited you."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Maud," he cried, releasing her hands at once.

Wishing them both good-night, Maud left the room as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER XVI.

SISTERLY CARE.

"—— that I am wretched
Makes thee the happier."

NEXT day Maud declined riding out with Stephen, for Blanche, who was nursing a headache and trying to get it well by evening, wished to have her, as the De Lisles were coming to dinner; so he went alone. After luncheon, Blanche said she would lie down, and Maud went with her to bathe her forehead.

Provided with a book, Maud spent the whole afternoon in Blanche's room, not leaving until the dressing bell rang; and Blanche got up, declaring she was much better.

The white muslin was duly donned, Maud hastening over her toilette so as to be in the drawing-room before the visitors arrived, and she was there for some time alone. Stephen was the first to enter. He looked very handsome to-

night in his plain dinner dress; so Maud thought as he advanced towards her, twirling his chain: his old habit.

"Maud, I have seen nothing of you all day. Why didn't you ride out with me?"

"Blanche was not well."

"You must go with me to-morrow, or I shall get savage." He stood close beside her chair, and looked down at her face. "I'm positive you've been keeping too close of late. You've sprung up amazingly; just like a forced hothouse plant: and you're so pale."

"Like an ill weed," laughed Maud.

"No, no, Maud. How nicely you do your hair! I never saw any one who did it so well, or had such nice hair."

He put his hand on it and stroked it. The handle of the door moved, and he stepped away. Blanche came in.

"Are you here, Maud?" she exclaimed, in a tone of surprise. "You must have dressed very quickly."

"I did. I wanted to be ready before anyone came."

"Stephen was actuated by a similar motive perhaps."

The look that accompanied these words was not lost on Maud. She became hot all over, and

her vexation barely had time to subside, before Mr., Mrs., and Miss De Lisle were announced, followed by other guests; with whom, however, we have nothing to do.

Mr. De Lisle, tall, stiff, stout, and pompous; Mrs. De Lisle, small, waxen, rouged and affected; Miss De Lisle, slight, graceful, and most lovely. She was attired in light blue; some thin material, which made her look quite fairy-like. Anything so ethereal-looking as this small, elegant figure, Maud had never seen before, in the way of human beings.

She had large dreamy blue eyes, a complexion of alabaster, golden hair drooping in ringlets over a neck and shoulders of ivory, pearly teeth and rosy lips. Such was beautiful Florence De Lisle; and from the moment Maud saw her, she gave Stephen up to the rich, youthful, lovely heiress.

Maud was introduced. Mr. De Lisle made a sublime bow, drawing himself up afterwards; and in fact, reflecting the bow backwards. Mrs. De Lisle curtseyed graciously. Miss De Lisle scarcely noticed Maud; who, in the midst of such fine folks and elegance, felt she must resemble a giraffe in point of stature, being head and shoulders taller than the De Lisle ladies.

At last the visitors were all assembled. Maud

went in to dinner with Sir Thomas Tracy, a friend of Stephen's, but a gentleman whom the old squire did not much care about. With his eye-glass stuck in a chronic manner in his eye, he rattled and talked all dinner-time; his conversation chiefly turning on horses, and *Bell's Life*. Once Maud had seen him at Woodford, but now he asked for her father as if he was on the terms of closest intimacy. He was a slight, wiry man, and wore a profusion of dark hair, which, with a squint he had in the unglassed eye, gave him a very unpleasant appearance in Maud's opinion.

Dinner was protracted to a wearisome length. Miss De Lisle being seated on the same side of the table as Maud, the latter could not see her, but several times heard Stephen address her, and heard her lisp replies back.

Maud, seated between Sir Thomas and Mr. De Lisle, had not a very enjoyable time of it; for when she—wearied of the baronet's ceaseless rattle—flagged and leant back, he talked over her plate to Mr. De Lisle, whose high-sounding replies boomed unmeaningly in her left ear, while the other's continuous prate distracted her right.

However, dinner drew to a close at last, and soon after the ladies retired. Maud presently

found herself seated on an ottoman with Miss De Lisle, who, in a listless way, asked, while coffee was being handed round,—

"Did you ever live at Woodford?"

"Yes."

"Not all the year round, surely?"

"Certainly. Most of my life was spent there."

"Gracious! Did you not die of *ennui*?"

"Oh, no." Maud smiled.

"Was it not dreadfully dull?"

"Dull? Never."

"Really I could never exist there, but for Forrestrange. Miss Forrester is excessively kind: I suppose you have always known her?"

"Yes; all my life."

"And Mr. Forrester?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think he's very handsome?"

Maud laughed, but made no reply.

"Tell me, *do* you admire him?"

"Oh, we are such old friends that it is not necessary for me to admire him," returned Maud; and in the hope of turning the conversation, asked,

"Do you like the country?"

The little beauty yawned. "No," she replied, languidly.

Had there been a back to the ottoman, Miss

De Lisle would have leant against it oppressed with *ennui*. Maud was meditating abdication of her seat, when the gentlemen entered.

Stephen glanced round, and walked straight to the two young ladies.

"I shall rebuke Mr. Forrester," said Miss De Lisle to Maud, as he approached.

"For what?" asked Maud, glad for once to be engaged in conversation.

"For running away last night."

"Not before ascertaining that Miss De Lisle was engaged for the remainder of the evening," replied Stephen, making an obeisance.

Miss De Lisle playfully tapped at him with her fan.

"Oh, you storyteller," she said.

"Would I were telling a story!" returned Stephen, gallantly: "'twere better for me; but it is a bitter truth."

"How droll you are! do you mean to say you wouldn't stop because I was engaged so many deep?"

"Even so," interrupted Stephen, with another profound bow.

"Then I must forgive you. See there are plenty to form a quadrille. Do let us dance: I will valse with you."

Stephen looked at Maud as if he were extremely

amused. Maud smiled too, but was wishing herself a hundred miles away at the same time.

"Do you play?" asked Miss de Lisle.

"Yes," replied Maud.

"No, no, Maud, you must dance," broke in Stephen. "I will find you a partner directly, and you will please be our *vis-à-vis*."

"No, thank you, I prefer playing if I may," persisted Maud.

So a quadrille was formed, Maud playing; then a valse followed, which became interminable. Blanche offered to relieve Maud, and did so at last, but Miss De Lisle declared she did not play in good time; so Maud, although tired, went back to the piano, and played until Mrs. De Lisle, following Florence round the room as she revolved with Stephen, broke up the party, by announcing the lateness of the hour, and requesting they would cease dancing.

"How provoking!" said Florence (they were close by Maud) "we were going on so delightfully; you suit me exactly as a partner."

"Do I? Then promise to dance the first dance with me at the hunt ball at Frorn, next week."

The beauty inclined her head, and wrote the engagement on her tablets; which she asked Maud to reach, together with her handkerchief, fan and bouquet, lying on the piano.

Soon after, the company left. Stephen, when he had escorted the last lady to her carriage, returned into the drawing-room, and throwing himself at full length on a sofa, asked,

"Did you ever see such a queer little thing as Florence De Lisle, Maud?"

Before Maud made any reply, Blanche came in with,—

"Why use that expression, Stephen? Miss De Lisle is acknowledged to be a great beauty, and very charming; don't you think so, Maud?"

"She is very pretty," said Maud.

"Absurd little creature, she's just like a child," remarked Stephen.

"She's delightful and unsophisticated, if you like," observed Blanche.

"Hum — Maud, sing me something," said Stephen: "one of your old songs; do, that's a good girl."

"I declare you quite impose on Maud," said Blanche quickly. "It is quite too late to-night; besides, she's been playing all the evening for you."

"Playing for me? not at all: I should have preferred Maud's dancing with me to playing for me. Don't think, Maud, you sat at that piano for me."

"Come, let us go to bed," interrupted Blanche.

"Maud, you are unaccustomed to sit up so late: you are looking quite pale."

Maud was borne off, and when she had shut and locked her door, she paced the carpeted floor noiselessly, in tearless, intolerable misery. And this was only the first of many nights that her heart ached too insupportably to let her be still or at rest; for there was so much visiting going on, that she met Miss De Lisle daily. All Stephen's kindness and attention to herself of a morning made her only feel the flirtation between him and Florence of an evening the more keenly.

Yet it would not do to cut her visit short; so she struggled on, the strong love in her heart giving her mortal pain, and Stephen's tenderness of manner when they were alone, adding all the more to her suffering: for, in spite of herself, she could not help loving him.

Blanche was very kind to Maud, except when Stephen was present; then her manner often became quite disagreeable: but not in a way that Maud could comment on. Here is an instance. The De Lisles had called on Maud, and she was to return the visit. It was a fine, bright, frosty day, and Stephen proposed they should walk to Woodford. Accordingly after luncheon they set out the short way, by the wooden bridge and meadows.

When Maud got to the meadows, a longing came over her for her old home. She felt a choking sensation in her throat.

"My dear Maud, what is the matter?" Blanche asked.

Maud at length tremblingly replied,—

"I wish you and Stephen would call at Woodford without me; it is so painful for me to go there."

"Nonsense, Maud! we will wait until another day if you like."

"No; pray go to-day: indeed I cannot go there," and Maud turned round the other way.

"My dear Maud, you are really giving way to weakness."

"No, she is not: it isn't what I should care for doing myself, if Forrestrange were let to a lot of people. I can understand Maud's feelings. Go on, Blanche, and I will return with her," said Stephen.

"*I* can return with Maud, if she needs company."

"Oh, I don't mind going home alone. I am very sorry, Blanche, to be so foolish."

It was not fancy on Maud's part; for a scornful look flitted over Blanche's face as she interrupted,

"You cannot object to walking alone from

this to Forrestrange; but perhaps we may overtake you before you get there."

The emphasis and look were unnoticed by Stephen, though Maud understood both; he only saw that a hurt, chilled expression came over her face, and he said in a kind, gentle manner,

"Dear Maud, return home with me; I know the effort of going is too much for you this morning. If Blanche thinks it necessary to pay a visit at Woodford, she can; you and I will go back."

He offered her his arm, and indeed drew her hand within it.

"Oh, I have not the smallest desire to proceed," said Blanche; "I was only anxious for Maud to return Miss De Lisle's visit: I should regret if the De Lisles set Maud down as rude."

"Rude be—hanged!" returned Stephen. "Confound it! why should Maud be teased to call there? It is too bad of you, Blanche: you never think of anyone but yourself. The fact is, *you* want to go there: you seem to think these De Lisles everything. Come, Maud, *we* will walk back, anyhow."

"We shall meet Miss De Lisle this evening, and I can tell her of Maud's sensitiveness," coldly

replied Blanche, turning and taking Stephen's other arm.

She was sufficiently disagreeable all the way home; scarcely speaking, except to say things which hurt Maud to the quick, yet in a way that Maud only could feel the force of her remarks. As for Stephen, he walked along in high spirits, unheeding his sister's crossness, and with that indescribable manner toward Maud which caused a secret extasy to steal over her at these moments.

So the days passed. Maud guessed it all now. Blanche perpetually came between herself and Stephen. Whenever he was out of the way, or whenever he assumed an indifferent manner towards Maud, Blanche would be all kindness; if, on the contrary, he sought Maud, his sister would be gall and bitterness. And as Stephen never spoke plainly to Maud, nor ever declared any love, she could not rest on him.

"I see how matters are," thought Maud in her bedroom; "I am the source of dread to Blanche. Naturally she would prefer Stephen's caring for beautiful, rich Miss De Lisle, before me. If I remain here any longer there will be a breach between the brother and sister. Well, I will not be the cause. If I were even—if I disregarded Blanche, how would things end?"

She looked up at the cold night sky, as if listening to some unseen monitor; then said to herself, "All would end in utter misery to myself. I am neither rich nor beautiful; Miss De Lisle is both: she is in love with him too. Of course he cannot help admiring her: it is evident that he does; love is sure to follow. And I? well, the sooner I go away the better. Yes, I will write a note to Hugh now."

By the fast dying flame of the candle she wrote.

"DEAREST HUGH,

"I DON'T wish to remain from home any longer. As I can't well propose to leave so soon, will you write by return of post to request me to do so. Say you want me (I have no doubt you do), and desire me to come the first day I can.

"Your affectionate sister,

"MAUD."

The day following a large party came to stay in the house. The weather opened and the gentlemen went hunting. Stephen wanted Maud to go too; but somehow Blanche had engaged Maud for something else.

The house was to be full until after the ball at Frorn.

Maud saw but little of Stephen now: he was out all day, and in the evening of course had to divide his attention between his other lady guests.

The day of the ball came. Maud had said nothing of her intention not to go, for she expected Hugh's letter in answer to her own, which would smooth away all difficulties.

It came that very day.

Just before dinner, which had been ordered an hour earlier, Maud went to Blanche's room, her morning room, where she sat already dressed.

Briefly Maud explained that she had heard from home, and wished to go on the morrow, consequently she would not attend the ball to-night; but it would be no disappointment whatever, as all along she never intended it.

Blanche declared astonishment and expressed her conviction it was all nonsense: Maud *must* go to the ball; should not go home to-morrow, and so forth. But Maud was determined; and in the midst of assertions from one as to the necessity of going home and contradictions and remonstrances from the other, Stephen, just returned from hunting, walked in.

"Maud is taken with an obstinate attack," cried Blanche; "she says she won't go to the ball to-night."

"What?" exclaimed Stephen.

"She says she won't go with us to-night. And why do you think, Stephen? because she declares she is going home to-morrow! Did you ever hear such a thing?"

Maud, to avoid questionings, put Hugh's letter into Stephen's hand.

"Oh, very well," said Stephen, after he had read it. "It is Maud's way: I remember how she used to be formerly. You are going, I suppose?"

"I must," she answered softly, the tears involuntarily rising.

"Yes, of course," he said, getting quite pale.

Suddenly he got up, and strode out of the room whistling.

"You have made him angry, Maud," said Blanche, when he was out of hearing. "Indeed, I think you had better stay."

There was something so cold and unpleasant in her tone as she now spoke, that Maud's passion rose.

"Stay to restore him to good-humour?" she asked.

"Certainly: why not?"

Maud did not reply, but tearing Hugh's letter into fragments, threw the pieces into the fire.

"Come, Maud, don't be annoyed: I don't mean to insinuate that you have the care of him by any means; far be it from you to have such a responsibility."

Blanche laughed. She was presently called away. During her absence, Stephen returned, having dressed hastily. He glanced round, and seeing only Maud, came and sat at her side, and with his old manner, said,

"You won't go to-morrow, now, will you?"

"Yes, I must. Will you let me be driven to the station?"

Maud's passion had cooled, and she answered steadily.

He played with her watch chain instead of his own.

"It is very unkind of you," he said.

"Oh, no, Stephen; consider papa."

He kept fingering her chain, and opened his lips as if about to speak. He drew a long breath and began, in a low tone,

"Maud—" when Blanche reappeared.

"If you persist in going," he abruptly said, raising his voice, "you must allow me to escort you to the end of the railroad journey, and see you safe in the coach."

"How can you?" interrupted Blanche; "when the hounds meet at eight to-morrow, and all

CHAPTER XVII.

HUGH.

"—— With the stars
And the quick spirit of the universe
He held his dialogues——"

In the welcome of home again, Maud felt happier than she had supposed she ever could be when she left Forrestrange. The weather was beautiful; soft February days, succeeded by still moonlight nights. Her time soon became occupied; for Hugh, immersed in reading for his ordination, could attend but little to Mr. Gwynne, and Maud read, wrote, and walked out with her father incessantly.

There was no doubt now that his blindness was increasing. That day on returning from his walk he asked,

"Is it time for candles, Maud?"

"Not just yet, papa."

"To me the evening is dark, my dear," he sighed.

"Papa, try not to be downhearted," she said.

"Ah, it's easy for you to say that."

"Come—let me settle you in your chair," she said, "and we will go on with our book; we left off in such an interesting part."

"Yes; you got tired of reading, Maud."

"No, really I wasn't tired, only you insisted on it and made me close the book," she replied cheerfully.

"Your voice sounded hoarse, and it wearied me to listen; I don't desire to be read to now," he said dejectedly.

"Well, I will sing to you then."

She sang until Hugh came down from the room appropriated as his study, for tea; after which she would have her evening class.

Hugh also took a great interest in this class, which now numbered about thirty. Frequently he taught the Bible lesson, and spoke to the young people afterwards, exhorting them to be holy, and constant in serving God; concluding by prayer and singing.

"Miss Gwynne's school" soon got generally talked about, and numbers applied for admission from long distances up in the hills.

Maud worked hard: she knew she must occupy her mind, to banish the memory which haunted her; though it was ever there. Sometimes she

had yielded to a momentary thought of Stephen; but the suffering which followed became so intolerable, that now she resolutely determined to fill her mind with other ideas, and not for one moment, if possible, to give way to thoughts which rendered her life miserable.

So time passed on, and Hugh's ordination drew near. Spring was conquering winter, and Maud was glad of the lengthening days and shortening nights: it was so hard to repress thought during the sleepless hours of the night!

In the daytime she was so busy that the inward suffering which, notwithstanding her strong efforts, ever oppressed her, was prevented from assuming a shape: it was only a distant funereal cry, which sounded indistinctly, as it were. But at night when tossing on her pillow, it became a loud wail ringing in her ears; and do what she would, she could not be deaf to it: no wonder then she hailed the lengthening days. Her school flourished; the boys and girls were getting on well with their writing, and those who were possessed of copy-books carried them home to exhibit to friends, with much pride. There is a mystery though, which baffles Morris, the head of the writing class (a great broad-shouldered young man); he sees no difference between R and B, and to-night his R's and B's

stand in curious relation: Beware is Reware, and Regard, Begard.

"Look, Morris—you must turn B in—so," says Maud, showing him on the slate; "R, out, in this way."

The rest of the class look up, Morris tries, but his unlucky Beware becomes Reware, again.

Maud explains for the fiftieth time, and with her own pen, the difference between R and B.

The class stoop their heads and titter; and Morris in a rage, dashing down his pen, blubbers, "Pother the P, what do I care which way she turn," and rushes off.

Mrs. Pritchard is the only one who has taken no interest in the school: she views it with severe aspect. "A set of boors without no manners whatever. Tut—why should missy take so much trouble? She will never get thanks for it."

Another week passed. Hugh went for his ordination, returning to Hafod for a short time only, before going to his curacy in the south of England. He was so grave looking, that little Mary, who always dubbed him "my big brother," asked Maud confidentially, whether he was naughty, and whether he had been punished?

Certainly to the child he might appear much changed, for he wore a coat of extreme length,

which was altogether a new style of garb for him to appear in.

When Maud assured her little sister that Hugh was not in disgrace, Mary took the earliest opportunity, afterwards, of asking him why he wore that "big long coat?"

"I will tell you why, little Mary," replied Hugh, "soldiers are known by their dress, and God's ministers ought to be known by theirs——"

"But, Hugh," interrupted Maud, "this dreadful coat is so unbecoming: I wish you wouldn't wear it——"

"Maud—Maud, you are a sadly giddy girl," interrupted Hugh, patting her cheek.

"Not at all: I only wish you not to make a fright of yourself!"

"My dear Maud, I think it right my vocation should be known——"

"But not by that ridiculous garment. I'm certain the people hereabout will be prejudiced against you; they'll say it's a cloak for a multitude of sins: I know their sentiments."

Hugh looked grave.

"It is unwise to go against the prejudices of the people on an unimportant point," he observed.

"And people often think more strongly on unimportant points than on points of vital importance," remarked Maud.

"I'll tell you how it is, Hugh," said Mr. Gwynne. "A dead leaf on the surface marks the current of the stream. By adopting a particular style, though in itself utterly unimportant, you become marked. I would advise you to belong to no extreme views: there is very little religion in that."

Hugh's countenance lit up, and a strange fervour beamed in his serious eyes.

"Father," he said, "party views are wrong—utterly wrong; but to be a minister of the Catholic English Church—a life-giving church, full of piety, and holiness, and divine beauty; a church of saints, and martyrs, if need be: a church which is an ark on the seas of this mortal life; a church that has rejected Rome, with all its falseness and horrors—to be a minister in this holy church, though most unworthy I be, is my desire. I would live for the church, I would die for the church."

"Ah, well, my boy, you are in the right to act up to your convictions; but you must pardon me for saying that all this high-churchism and long-coatism verges on the absurd."

Hugh looked vexed, but answered gently,—

"My high-churchism consists in yearning for the church to awake from her torpor—to cease to be cold, nay, almost lifeless, as she has been

during late generations: this is what I long for; this is what, if I am vouchsafed opportunities, I will labour for. Oh," he added, "that I may be faithful and zealous in the church militant, that when life's troubled sea is passed, I may be of the church triumphant in Heaven."

A wonderful radiance came into his face as he spoke.

It was Maud's class night; but only three or four of her pupils came.

"Where are the rest?" asked Maud.

The pupils looked one at the other, hesitated, and said at last,—

"Please, 'm, they're in the chapple."

"In chapel? I was not aware they went to chapel. Have they been in the habit of going?"

"No, 'm, not till the revival come, 'm."

"The revival? what's that?"

They all answered at once,—

"The revival, 'm, that's everywhere; it came to Carrag last week, and came here last Sunday."

"But what do you mean by the revival?"

"Oh, 'm, the revival that makes all the people——"

The informant stopped short; she felt at a loss to describe what it made the people do.

"Do you mean," asked Maud, "that it is a sort of religious movement?"

"Yes, 'm, that's just what it is: all the people is in movement, 'm, jumping and shaking like anything."

"So the class is gone to chapel?"

"Yes, 'm."

"Well, let us set to work; perhaps the others will come by and by."

"Oh, no, 'm."

"Don't they intend coming again?"

"No, 'm."

"Indeed! why not?"

The girls hung down their heads. Susan, being in the secret, answered,—

"Please, 'm, because they say you teach pusey, 'm."

"Teach *what?*"

"Pusey," replied all in a chorus.

"Explain—I don't understand," said Maud, addressing herself to the head girl.

"Please, 'm, they say the gentleman is pusey," she replied, blushing.

"Yes, 'm," said another, garrulously, "and that he teach you and all pusey, and that he bow to the picture on the window in church, and worship dead old men, and go with the papists who eat their own children."

"Who told you all this?"

The girl looked abashed.

Maud receiving no reply, asked again whether they believed these stories?

"No, 'm, we doesn't, but them does."

Susan laughed outright, and the rest joined. Maud gave them their lesson, and after they were gone she went into the parlour, and told her father and Hugh what had occurred.

It was a fine, clear night; the full moon shone on the glittering wavelets of the high spring tide, and bright sparkles flashed out in the wet shingle. The tide was going down, and more and more faintly sounded on the beach; the wind had fallen, and the night was perfectly still.

Hugh was leaving on the morrow for his distant curacy, and now, Maud having dismissed her few pupils, he asked her to walk out with him to enjoy the beautiful effects of pearly moonlight, silvered sea, sparkling beach and soft shadow.

Their walk led by an old barn on the bank, from which there arose as they passed the wildest outcries; not from one voice merely, but from a score or two. They walked quickly round the building, and, looking in at the door, beheld within a frenzied crowd, some crying, others singing, and some shrieking; several too, evidently under strong excitement, throwing out their arms and

hitting right and left with considerable force: these had each a little space.

The cries and screams were dreadful, and Maud understood the main word used in the shriekings, "Save!"

A knot of people at the far end of the barn were singing, trying to drown the uproar it would seem, and several were groaning out "Amen;" altogether such a babel of confusion and noise cannot well be described.

Presently Maud asked a woman near the door what it all meant.

"Oh," replied the person she addressed, who was able to speak English,—"It's the blessed revival! it's going round the country! it's going from house to house. It came to Hafod farm; but the house was too small, so everyone came here because it's nearer than the chapple. Oh, it's blessed and wonderful! hist. There, they've seen you, Miss Gwynne! and now some one will pray beautiful in Inglis, that you may hear: hist!"

The woman pushed excitedly through the crowd, just as there came a temporary lull; directly after a high and shrill voice was heard.

Maud discovered that it was one of her late pupils. He went on for some time on good works, until there was an interruption. Some one cried out,—"O iss, Morris! I will never buy no more

artificious (flowers she meant), but keep the coppers for good warks. Oh, oh!" and the girl tore her bonnet off, and dragged away the cheap finery.

Hereupon there was a general treble cry, and several girls catalogued (in doubtful English) their various toilette vanities; and smart ribbons, and other besetting gaieties, were ruthlessly torn off, and wailed over.

Then there was more shouting, shrieking, clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and clamour; while the high pitched voice was heard still going on in a frantic sort of way: though nobody attended to him: for everyone was fully occupied in his, or her own, noise and zeal.

A climax came at last in one strained, agonized, distracting shout; after which two or three women had to be carried out. Then a decent-looking man who had been standing by Maud, made his way into the crowd, and getting on some planks in a corner, led a hymn, with a clear powerful voice; the crowd at last joining. After which there was a short interval of silence, during which he spoke in Welsh. This is the translation of part of what he said:—

"Like yourselves I am a methodist. That a great awakening has come over the chapels I do not doubt. Your consciences tear you (well they

may); you are under the conviction of overwhelming sin; you are frightened, borne down by its enormity. But this I say, that these shoutings and groans will not free you; these gatherings and this excitement will not tend to godliness —no. Go home, and each one of you say your prayers in secret before you go to bed. Instead of meeting thus, night after night, you who are distracted with a sense of guilt and misery, retire to a *secret place* and there pour out your hearts, for there will the Saviour be to help and comfort."

He got thus far, when a woman screamed out, "Oh, my heart iss plack! my heart iss plack!" and began sobbing and tearing her hair. Whereupon the most distracting clamour arose again. The man descended from the planks, and left the barn at the same time that Hugh drew Maud away.

They walked on and soon reached the rock above the shore. The tide had ebbed far, and the yet wet beach gleamed like silver in the moonlight. There was not a breath of air, and the ever-sounding sea murmured only a vague, indefinite sound. But from the barn the crowd began to pour, filling the still night with discord. From between the budding hedges, over which the spring hoar frost was stealing, and from the mountain path, crisped now by the night frost,

frightful shrieks arose, as the revivalists went along.

Maud and Hugh stood quiet in the moonlight. She glanced at him, and saw his face was quite white.

"Are you not well?" she asked.

He made no reply, but began speaking softly, as if soliloquizing.

"Poor creatures! Are they yearning for the bread of life? Are they clamouring thus when the manna is showered around? Have not the glad tidings reached their ears that salvation is free to all who will work it out? Can they deem that this is one method of fighting the good fight? Do they imagine that through horrible excitement, a glorious immortality may be attained? Can their leaders call *this* religion? Does all this tend to holiness? God is all merciful, all powerful, ever present. Why then these bawlings from the highways? They must know that deep, earnest prayer in secret will reach Him. Adoration ascending from grateful hearts, however lonely, however solitary, will be acceptable in Heaven. Can they think this frightful discord is well-pleasing?"

"I suppose they do," broke in Maud. "I know very well that amongst the rural population, vast gatherings, dreadful groans, and much sermo-

nizing, take the place of the moral duties of life; for which, in fact, they have no regard, and which are flagrantly neglected."

Hugh clasped his hands and looked upwards: an almost divine light came into his dark eyes. "Oh," he said, "that our Father would recal his wandering sheep! Oh, that the one mighty example were followed, and that in religion the unutterable, the sublime, with its boundless love, faith, and hope, men would find joy!" In the clear moonlight Maud saw the rapt expression of his countenance, and forbore to speak. "Only in true religion can Christ's life be followed," he went on, pausing as shrill screams echoed from the hillside. Cries, shouts, and singing, again jarred distractingly, and Maud clapped her hands on her ears. Hugh was silent for a moment as these hideous noices continued, then raising his hands, he said,—

"Has it then come to this? Can these poor souls deem that only by horrible shriekings they may become the children of Heaven? Is this regeneration? O Father! open Thou their eyes to the light of Thy truth. Amen."

He walked rapidly onwards, followed by Maud. They turned the corner of the cliff, and presently were out of hearing of the revival cries.

Here they were close on the beach, which shone

like silver, the ripples of the falling tide toning faintly along the glittering edge.

"Oh!" exclaimed Hugh, stopping, "for a sweet commune with nature—that nature which, in the record of creation, God pronounced very good! Maud, does not this glorious scene exalt you? Does it not raise your mind and make you long for that purity and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Oh, dear sister! in this commune with nature let us forget the beauty of the visible, for the glory of the Invisible and Eternal!"

Maud was awed: there was quenchless desire for heaven written on his face, as he stood silent looking upwards. In aftertime she remembered that look with inexpressible comfort.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STORMY NIGHT.

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions."

MAUD rose early the following morning to accompany Hugh to Carrag, where he would take the coach for the station. The weather changed at daybreak, the wind dropping down to the south and freshening every hour since, and Hugh's journey to his curacy would occupy more than one day. When the coach drove off, Maud turned homewards wretched.

Now there would be no one to help to cheer her father; no one to talk to him as Hugh had done. And of late Mr. Gwynne's spirits had been very low: most depressing to Maud; for he would take no manner of interest in what she read to him, averring it fatigued him to hear reading. Then he would grope out of the room, and Maud, starting up to assist him, would be rebuffed.

"I wish you would not watch me in this way, my dear; it annoys me."

"But, papa, let me open the door for you."

"I can open it very well myself. This ceaseless surveillance on your part brings my infirmity very painfully before me; I wish you would let me be, Maud."

So Maud would remain quiet, and Mr. Gwynne would continue his groping, she only minding that nothing stood in his way; for on one or two occasions he had stumbled and fallen, and his forehead frequently bore marks of where he had struck his head against something. But he declined all assistance, and would not allow that he needed it until to-day, when Maud returned from Carrag. He stood in the doorway with the gusty wind blowing back his white hair; as Maud came up, he was examining his hand apparently, and hearing her footsteps, he advanced, stumbling, however, against the door-mat.

"Oh, papa!" cried Maud, hastening towards him.

"My dear, I am stone-blind!" was all he said.

She burst into tears, and he felt his way up and down the passage. Presently he said,—

"I have known this for some time, Maud; but I would not speak of it while Hugh was

here. I was trying to see your mother's ring which you know I wear, as you came up, but I could not: that was the last thing I saw. Yes, I am quite blind now."

This was a miserable day to Maud, and it passed drearily. Dark clouds came up from seawards, passing over Hafod and dragging heavily along the mountain tops. After dinner she sat at her desk to write letters. Blanche had written several times without any reply from Maud; but the former with much good-humour excused this, and wrote with extreme regularity all the same. No doubt she was prompted by considerations of Mr. Gwynne, for in one of her letters she said,—"Whether you are able to write back or not, Maud, I will write once a fortnight at least, for I dare say your father likes to hear what passes in his old neighbourhood." Which was true, and Mr. Gwynne frequently expressed surprise that Maud was so lax in replying to Blanche's pleasant, gossiping letters.

Now as these letters told how Florence De Lisle was admired, how she was the belle at all the county balls, how beautifully she acted the Lady of Lyons at the private theatricals got up at Woodford in the large new drawing-room (Stephen being Paul Melnotte), and so forth,—it is not to be wondered that Maud did

not find intense pleasure in her old friend's communications, and consequently did not reply to them with ardour. But this afternoon she sat down and wrote. Before she had finished, some one brought letters from Carrag (she was too early for the post in the morning), and there was one from Blanche.

"Doubtless, my dear Maud, you know you are undeserving of a letter. What prevents your writing? I would punish you if I could by not writing to you, but the truth is, I cannot resist telling you of an event which is likely to happen soon. Very probably you may have an idea of what it is, for when you were here you must have seen the admiration Stephen entertained for Miss De Lisle. I am sure you will not be the least surprised to hear they are now engaged. Indeed who could be insensible to her beauty and charms?

"Stephen, with his customary impatience, declares he will not wait long (you know his temperament), and so the marriage is to take place directly. Why should they delay? Florence has nothing to do but order her trousseau; therefore, why wait? Pray write to congratulate Stephen."

Then the letter went on to describe what was to be: the glories of the wedding, the bridesmaids, the dresses, &c., which Maud read me-

chanically, without taking one word in; though her voice never faltered.

Mr. Gwynne expressed no surprise; he said,—

"I guessed as much from Blanche's letters. Well, I hope Stephen will be happy. He's a good fellow, and deserves a good wife. Yes, Maud, you certainly must wish him joy."

Towards sunset Maud went out; Mary promised to be good and not make a great noise while she was absent. Heavy, storm-laden clouds were flying up from the dark horizon, while the wind had increased to a gale. Torn branches were strewed on the ground beneath the sycamores, and the wind moaned and howled through the trees, as Maud walked rapidly up the hill: she could not well get to the shore, for the drifting sand would have blinded her.

On she went, regardless of the tempest, through the wood and up the bare mountain side, to the verge of where the mists rolled. Here she sat down on a stone, and watched the stormy sunset. Blood-red light streaming from black clouds illumined the desolate moorland slope with a lurid hue for one moment; then a deep gloom fell, and after the sun sank the creeping mist came lower and lower. Still Maud sat there; she could not go indoors just yet: being in the house was insupportable. She must give way to her misery now.

And Stephen was going to be married! She knew it would come to this long ago, and she thought she was prepared for it; but somehow it was a dreadful shock to her. Yes! All must be over now: her deep love, and pain. But how to quench it? She must never let her thoughts rest on him again; never: in all her loneliness, she must never think of him—never. How could he marry this Miss De Lisle so soon? Three months ago, she (Maud) knew he had no regard for Little Woodford; yet now she was about to become his wife. She was rich and lovely; he was taken with her: but how could he marry so soon—so soon?

The wind came sweeping up the hill, moaning past the crags, and whistling up the rifts as Maud sat there. Soon the mists crept down, and when land and sea were hid, and night fell, she rose and retraced her steps along the rough stony track, homewards.

During the hour she had remained on the hill, she had not shed a single tear, and now she ran down the road with her misery locked in her heart, making up her mind never, never more to think of Stephen Forrester.

The fire burned cheerily in the old parlour. Mr. Gwynne in his easy-chair had been dozing, while Mary undressed and dressed her doll on the

rug, keeping up a continuous flow of talk to her beloved "Topsy."

The windows rattled, and the doors banged in the gale which roared round the old house, and the tall poplar at the gable end creaked and strained so that Mr. Gwynne predicted its uprooting before morning.

It was Mary's bedtime, and mammy came for her. As an interesting piece of news, Mary informed her nurse how Topsy was going to have a new frock in honour of a wedding that was to take place very soon.

"Whose, my deary?" asked Mrs. Pritchard, lifting Mary up.

"Oh, such a nice wedding, mammy: I dare say Maud will go to it."

"No, Mary," said Maud.

"Whose wedding is it, missy?"

"Mr. Forrester's, mammy."

"Whose?" screamed Mrs. Pritchard, setting Mary down again.

"Mr. Forrester and Miss De Lisle's."

"What?" Mammy had by this lifted both her hands, and stepped backwards.

"Yes, mammy," said Maud steadily. "He is going to marry Miss De Lisle directly."

"Laws bless us! Is he in his right mind?" she exclaimed.

"Miss De Lisle is very pretty, mammy," said Maud.

"But, missy—oh, laws!—he—Mister Stephen going to marry—hum—any one that is a stranger? Oh, laws! it can't be true."

"Yes, it is: there is nothing surprising in it."

"Surprising! laws bless us, what can he be a thinking of! Missy, I'm 'stonished; it *can't* be true." With which Mrs. Pritchard caught Mary up, and flounced indignantly out of the room.

Maud busied herself until bedtime with music. It occurred to her that her father might derive some amusement if he tried to learn to play himself, so she proposed it, and to her delight he readily acceded, and the evening passed; she giving him his first lesson—placing his fingers on the keys, and teaching him the scale.

Here was a new occupation, which she was glad of. She knew many blind people played well, and she resolved to spare no pains in inducing her father to acquire the art.

The clock struck eleven; it was scarcely heard for the wind, which moaned down the chimneys, whistled through the chinks, banged or shook the doors, and roared round the house. Although the tide was running out, the waves thundered on the beach, and clouds of spray dashed up, mingling

with the rain which now struck sharply against the window-panes.

"What a terrible night!" exclaimed Mr. Gwynne, rising from the piano. "I hope there may be no ships in the bay."

"There wasn't one in sight at nightfall, papa."

"That's well: sometimes there have been sad wrecks on this coast. Good-night, my dear."

"I'll go upstairs with you, papa; I want something from the nursery. But I'm not going to bed just yet, either: I want to finish those letters; one of the farm-servants will take them to the post in the morning."

Mary was fast asleep, and as Maud bent over the child, an unformed prayer fluttered from her heart that Mary might never know the suffering she herself endured.

"Truly," she thought, "it would be better to be unloving and unloved, than have acute feelings such as nature bestowed on me. I ought never to have been born: my misery is very great. What will life ever be to me?"

"I cannot get this marriage out of my head, missy," said mammy from the other side of the room.

Maud started from her stooping posture.

"Why, mammy, there is nothing strange or out of the way in it at all," she replied.

"Yes, missy, there is," pursued Mrs. Pritchard, tying her nightcap strings. "It is what I call a nonsensical, flash-in-the-pan concern. The old prophecy never meant them strangers at Woodford neither."

"What prophecy?" asked Maud.

"Deary me, don't you remember it, missy? Master Stephen used to ask me to sing it over and over again, when he was a curly-headed, blue-eyed little fellow of six or seven: he and Master Hugh were the friends then; but Master Hugh, *my* boy, was always more serious and pale than Master Stephen, who was the most restless, rosy-cheeked little fellow I ever see.

"'Wind, Forrester, wind, blow loud thy horn.
One, not of thy name, though of thee born,
Hath ranged thy forest, doth scale thy height;
From Woodford he cometh in strength and might.'

You see, missy, it's rather dark and queerish."

"Good-night, mammy," said Maud, suddenly quitting the nursery.

She went straight downstairs again; she would not suffer herself to think for one moment. The old nurse's words brought back such crowding memories, that if she had given way she would have lain on the floor and cried in agony.

"If I go to bed I shall get restless and feverish; perhaps if I fatigue myself by sitting up late, I

may be able to sleep: but I must go and tell Susan to go to bed."

Loud roared the gale round the parlour gable, and along the front. The rain had ceased again, for the clouds were tossed before the rushing tempest. The kitchen was comparatively sheltered, and the storm sounds came indistinctly here.

To Maud's surprise, there were no indications of Susan's going to bed; a strong, clear fire glowed in the wide grate; the broad hearth was polished and ruddy, and near stood a clothes-horse, on which Susan put the linen she was ironing, to air. She was in the act of trying the temperature of a flat iron by holding it to her cheek when Maud entered.

"Oh, Susan, I came to tell you to go to bed. How is it that you seem to have so much work about so late?"

"All along of the new coals, 'm," replied Susan, ironing away.

"The new coals?"

"Oh, 'm, the coals that come in to-day. There's no end to 'em, 'm: I jist make up the fire as usual after tea, and here they be yet. I never see sich axcellent coals, 'm. So, seeing the good fire, I says to myself, them things shall be smoothed before I go to bed; and so I clapped

ns in the fire, and I shall have done them
twelve."

whole kitchen was in a glow from the
e; the red cinders tinkling as they dropped
he ashes: the coals, as Susan said, were
nt, and threw out intense heat.

n not going to bed just yet, either," said
. "Will you bring me a log of wood for
rlour fire?"

es, 'm, drekly; there's a pile just outside
or, here."

an ran across the kitchen, and out at the
door: the wind blew the candle out,
ed some of the light clothes from the
and banged to the out door.

ood laws!" cried Susan, speedily reappear-
ith a bundle of logs, her cap blown off,
ver see sich wind, nor never see it so dark
my born days: I couldn't see my hand.
it's worth while for you to look at the
'm."

ud reopened the door and went out a step
. The night was pitch black: the account
Egyptian darkness occurred to her. She
d back quickly, shut the door and bolted
d to turn to the ruddy kitchen.

's awful storm," remarked Susan, lighting
andle, which had been blown out; "but

we don't hear scarcely nothing of it here, when the doors are shut. It's dreadful in the parlour; indeed, 'm, you'd better stay here: I'll fetch the little table and desk. You'll get low-sperrited there, 'm; and the fire must be a'most out now."

"Certainly, your kitchen is very clean and bright, Susan: quite cheerful. Well, get me my things; and bring the candle that I left burning in the parlour: I can write here just as well as there."

Susan arranged her young mistress's table and chair in the warm fireplace of the broad hearth. Then she went on with her ironing, and Maud wrote fast, scarcely stopping to think; for at every pause one overwhelming thought would rush in. And so she wrote an *olla podrida* of everything that occurred to her; and as the letter was designed for Hugh, it did not much signify if there was a good deal of repetition and tautology.

She had been writing thus for some time, when a loud and rapid knocking was heard at the front door. Susan dropped her iron, leaving a triangular mark on the cloth, and turned to Maud with wide, distended eyes and paling cheeks.

Was it the wind? No: there it came again,

hasty and decided. Susan, terribly frightened, shook her head solemnly, and whispered,—

"Oh, missy! missy! it can't be nothin' 'uman!"

"We must see, at any rate," said Maud, starting up.

Now, a knock at the front door was of the rarest occurrence, for no visitors came to Hafod ever. Once, indeed, it so happened that a pedestrian, having lost his way, came to inquire the road; on which occasion Susan ran to Maud, and breathlessly exclaimed,—"Oh, 'm, there's a man!"

No wonder, then, that Susan was now in a state of terror, and Maud, to say the least, considerably startled.

"Oh, missy, don't go!" cried Susan; "it's somethin' suprenatral: the clock's jest on the stroke of twelve. Oh, dear, dear!"

Maud crossed the kitchen floor noiselessly; she hesitated in the passage—stopped—listened to the knocking, which shook the old nail-studded door, and then in a loud voice asked,—

"Who knocks at this hour?"

Susan stood aghast on the kitchen threshold, entreating missy not to speak.

"For de lub of de good God open de door," moaned a voice from outside.

"Who and what are you?"

"Open de door, or we dead soon," was the reply.

Pity impelled her to open; for the voice was faint: she thought it must be some poor wretch who had lost his way, and was half dead. Shading the candle carefully, she unlocked and drew back the door, and beheld a crowd of half-naked, shivering, dripping men; the foremost a negro. Susan, as the light flashed on them, shrieked,—

"Robbers! They'll kill and murder us!—master! master!"

Some were lying on the ground; and all trembled with cold and exhaustion. None spoke but the black man, who entreated to be taken in.

"No! no!" cried Susan from the end of the passage in a paroxysm of fright. "Go away, or we'll shoot the guns at you."

Maud stretched out her hand to the negro's hair, which sparkled with drops. The thought had occurred to her, "They are wet, yet it doesn't rain; it may be sea-water." She put her fingers to her lips, and cried, "Susan, they are shipwrecked sailors; the water is salt!"

They were all foreigners; the negro only spoke English, and his teeth chattered so that she could scarcely make out what he said. She saw they needed warmth and stimulants, and,

directing Susan, who by this was recovered, to call Mrs. Pritchard and arouse Mr. Gwynne, she poured out brandy, which the poor wretches eagerly swallowed. Then she and Susan got all the blankets they could find, and wrapped them round the half-drowned men, who now lay on the warm kitchen hearth.

"Oh, massa captain, him die on de shore," wailed the negro as he held his trembling hands to the fire: "him lie down! no go any more; me try carry him, but Nero fall and massa captain roll over Nero head; den massa doctor try, but massa captain him die, I tink, in massa doctor arm."

"Are there any more of you on the beach?" asked Maud.

"Massa captain an massa doctor; but 'em dead I tink: Nero go see now. Take brandy? an candle?"

Maud was horrorstruck to think there were two men unable to reach the house, though escaped from the waves. She got more brandy and a lantern, and ran out into the howling tempest, followed by the negro: he had attempted to carry the lantern, but his hands being numbed, it had dropped.

Several times Maud was nearly blown down, and she had hard work to struggle on, with

sand and pebbles driving against her face. She reached the shore at last; hardly could she stand; she was almost deafened too, and nearly bewildered by the roar of the tempest. She was endeavouring to keep her footing, when the light gleamed on a boat, bottom upwards, and a dark, huddled heap, nearer. She went to the spot, and found one man lying insensible and another bending over him, chafing his hands and trying to keep him warm.

"Here is brandy; give him some, and drink yourself," said Maud.

Without a word the bottle was seized, and some poured down the exhausted man's throat.

"Massa doctor, Nero strong now," cried the negro, who at this moment came up; "Nero carry massa captain up to house: him not die, I tink, perhaps."

"Die! no; here, lend a hand," exclaimed the doctor, lifting the captain up: "how far is the house off?"

"Close by," said Maud.

"All right! Come, Nero! Young lady, will you go first with the light?"

Between Nero and the doctor, the captain was carried to Hafod. They laid him in blankets near the fire, rubbed him, warmed his cold limbs, and when at last he opened his eyes, fetching

a deep sigh, Nero capered and shouted, "Hooray! hooray! massa captain 'live agen."

"Now," said the doctor, "we must take him to bed."

"Yes, to mine," said Mr. Gwynne, groping and leading the way up to his room.

The captain, covered over with blankets, soon fell into a comfortable sleep, and Mr. Gwynne and the doctor came back to the kitchen, where the fire had been replenished and food placed on the table.

"We were eighteen in the boat when she capsized in the surf; nine are drowned. We should all have died from exposure and cold, I take it, had not a light told us of a house being near. We had no idea where we were," said the doctor.

"Oh," cried Maud, "surely we ought to return to the beach; the others may be alive."

"No, young lady," replied the doctor, "there is no chance of that; the boat was upset a good hour before the men came here: all those who were not drowned are here, now."

It was as he said: the following tide brought the drowned men ashore; they never reached the land alive.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW DOCTOR.

"There are secret workings in human affairs, which overrule all human contrivance."

He was a muscular young man, of middle height, this doctor; broad across the chest, powerful, well made, compact, vigorous looking. He had a dark, ruddy face, short, black, curly hair, and large whiskers. His eyes were dark and deep set, and flashed out from beneath his strongly marked brows. His countenance was expressive of energy, coupled with strong feelings: it was a thoroughly masculine face; his head, too, was well-shaped, and the short, crisp, curly hair ran in rings all over it.

He was a fine, brave fellow, this ship doctor, and as he sat there wrapped in a blanket he recounted how the storm had gradually risen, driving them out of their course, until, in the dark, they completely lost the coast, and knew

not where they were. How the ship struck, first of all, on a sunken reef far out at sea; how, it being then low water, the captain refused to leave the vessel, trusting she would float off with the tide; how out of a crew of forty, only eighteen remained, the rest taking to the boats; how with the tide the ship got off, but, owing to her rudder being damaged, was found unmanageable; how the gale increased as the night came on, and they drove helplessly before the wind, in the darkness; how, suddenly, the roar of breakers was heard, and immediately after the ship struck, straining and bumping frightfully —the sea making clean breaches over her; how they managed to launch the remaining boat, which on the heave of a tremendous wave was swept clear of the wrecked ship, and carried close ashore; how the wave broke, turning the boat right over; how he seized the captain by the hair, and struck out for the land; how, up to his neck in the breakers, he managed to find footing, but was nearly washed away again, until with another huge wave (still grasping the captain) he was carried high on the beach; how he dragged the captain on to the shingle, left him there, and returned to help those he could; how only part of the boat crew came ashore; how they all lay there, cold and half dead, he alone (thanks to his

strong constitution, he said) being none the worse; how he was beginning to think that few of them would live until daylight—that they would perish miserably of starvation—when a bright light shot out of the darkness (this was Maud's candle in the parlour), and with the prospect of succour at hand, they made one last effort. The rest Maud knew.

"And the others, who left the ship at midday?" asked Maud.

"The wind then was due south. They may have reached shore safely, farther north than hereabouts. The wind got more westerly with the tide. If the poor fellows are not in port, they will never face another storm."

Maud shuddered.

"We seamen are used to this sort of thing. I take it, my turn will come one day: I suppose I only bide my time." He glanced carelessly at Maud as he said this, paused a moment, and resumed: "But I don't mean you to think that I am indifferent about the matter; not at all: I am grateful to Providence at the present moment; very: I might have been a corpse down below there; instead, here I am, as comfortable as can be, ready to ship to-morrow."

CHAPTER XX.

MARY RUTHLESSLY INVESTIGATES.

"'Tis a pretty picture."

Day broke; the storm had spent its fury; rain streamed in torrents from one great cloud which covered the sky. The breakers rolled heavily, foaming over the wreck, which was fast breaking up, and the shore was strewn with spars and bits of wreck. Under a tattered sail lay the drowned men: they were to be taken to Carrag Church, and there, in the churchyard above the sea, they would be buried side by side.

At Hafod, the captain and his men are turning out now, after several hours' refreshing sleep; except the ship doctor, who would not sleep, and when breakfast time came, partook thereof with good appetite: you would not have supposed he had been shipwrecked with the rest last night. He was full of vigour, and attended to the men, while they were yet faint and motionless on the

kitchen floor, as if he had only just been called in from his house over the way.

When little Mary came down in the morning, she was much appalled at the apparition of the doctor with a blanket on, through which he had cut an aperture for his head. Frightened, she ran to Maud, but presently raised her face to look again.

"Come here," said the doctor, good-naturedly: "I won't hurt you, little one."

Mary advanced a step or two towards the strange-looking figure, and stopped with her finger in her mouth.

"Won't you come?" he asked.

"What is that good for?" pointing to the blanket. "I don't like it," she said.

"Well, then, I'll take it off; I put it on to keep me warm, little girl."

He flung it away; in doing so, a narrow black ribbon round his neck came to sight.

Mary, being generally observant, remarked this, and a watch possessing wonderful attractions for her, she immediately said,—"That's the string of your watch."

"I've lost my watch."

"No, here it is," and, running up, she clutched at the ribbon.

He hastily put his hand to it.

"No, I have no watch."

"Yes, you have; show me the pretty watch."

She tugged at the string, and pulled, instead of what she expected, a miniature portrait to view.

"Oh, what a pretty picture! Maud, come and see it," she cried.

The doctor laughed, broke the string, put the miniature in Mary's hand, and said,

"It is a portrait of my cousin; she was brought up by my mother."

Mary flew with it to Maud, who at the first glance recognized it as Kate Bryan's picture!

"I think I know this young lady," she said; "is it not Miss Bryan?"

He started up.

"What? do you know Kate?"

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT THE WRECK BROUGHT.

"If it be not now, yet it will come."

WEEKS passed. What an excitement the wreck caused in the neighbourhood! People came and went; Custom-house officers, underwriters, men, women, and children, brought life and colour to the gray shore beneath Hafod. The unloading of the valuable cargo went on briskly. It was a most busy scene at low water: trains of carts and waggons carrying the cotton bales away; gangs of sailors, dismantling, and saving what they could from the ship.

Altogether it was a scene of great bustle and activity, and Susan confidentially told Maud she "had never any idea that a wreck was such a nice thing," and "to tell truth she had never seen Hafod pleasant till now."

The ship had been given over to the insurance company, and the captain and his men were gone;

the twenty-two men who had deserted her in the first instance having landed safely on another part of the coast. The day before the doctor left, he happened to be alone with Maud.

"You think me a great fool, don't you?" he asked suddenly.

Maud looked up.

"No," she answered.

"Yes, you do: that is, I have felt you do."

"Why?" she asked, laughing.

"Because you saw that I carried a woman's picture about with me."

"I have hardly given it a thought, I assure you."

"Well," he resumed, after a pause, "I will tell you all about it. You say you know my cousin. She was brought up by my mother: my house is Kate's too. We were great friends: more—at least, I thought so; and then I had her portrait, because, you know, she is pretty, and a man likes to look at a nice face whether in a picture or not. But soon afterwards she went away to that place you know of in England, where her mother's relations live. I don't know how it was, but after that we weren't such good friends, and one day we fell out completely; and the next day, without any unnecessary words, I told my mother I was going for a voyage. I took

charge of a lot of emigrants out to Australia, and from thence I went to South America. After wandering about till I was tired, it struck me that I ought to go and make it up with Kate."

"You won't go to sea again, then?" interrupted Maud.

"I can't tell. I am a fellow that won't stand being—well, I may as well say it—being bothered to death, if I can avoid it. Kate robbed me of all pleasure in life, and so off I went. If I find she goes on the same tack again, I shall ship to the nor'-west passage. It's of no use my staying at home to have the grapes I can't reach perpetually over my head: now, is it, Miss Gwynne?"

Maud laughed, and so did he. Presently he said:

"For your goodness to a wanderer, I thank you from my heart. If in years to come I can render you any service, I will; whatever that service may be."

"Thank you," replied Maud, smiling; "you don't know how that promise may have to be fulfilled."

"Whatever it may be, I will do it."

"Amen," said Maud, and they parted.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAUD GETS IMPATIENT.

"Oh, dreary life!" we cry—"oh, dreary life!"

STEPHEN FORRESTER was married.

Blanche had written to invite Maud to the wedding; indeed, she got quite angry because Maud refused. But never a word or message from Stephen.

There came a great piece of the wedding-cake for little Mary, who enjoyed it amazingly; likewise two dolls, one dressed as the bride, the other as one of the bridesmaids. There was a long account of the marriage in the *Frorn Gazette*, which paper Blanche sent to Mr. Gwynne, and which Maud faithfully read out from beginning to end.

The summer went by, and autumn came on, and the busy scenes on the beach vanished, and the winds of the autumnal equinox raged on the dreary shore. No life now; only the cold, grey coast, desolate as death.

None saw, none knew, the trials of Maud's life. The one great suffering which had absorbed others, it is true, was gone—quenched, it may be, in bitter tears during sleepless nights; or torn up, wrenched from the heart, by the force of strong determination. But that one sorrow which passed away had not left a hardness behind, as is the case in some natures. On the contrary, Maud became very sensitive, and felt other troubles far more acutely than she had ever done hitherto.

Mr. Gwynne's despondency became very great; although Maud suggested all she could think of as likely to give him a more cheerful frame of mind, and even proposed the sale of Woodford, to enable him to live in greater comfort again.

"Do you wish to give me further pain, Maud?" was his reply. "What does it matter where I live? Of course if *you* are tired of being at Hafod, Woodford had better go."

"Oh, papa! no," she exclaimed.

"Then I beg you will say no more on the subject. Indeed, my dear, I consider it hardly fair towards Hugh; who, I trust, may inherit the place after all, notwithstanding his father went very near depriving him of his birthright."

"Oh, papa! don't speak in that way," pleaded Maud.

"But it is true, Maud. The poor boy at this

moment ought not to be struggling on a curacy of—how much? yes; eighty pounds a year."

"Don't vex about that, papa: were Hugh in possession of thousands, he would yet be a clergyman."

"Ah! that reminds me, Maud, of another source of uneasiness."

"Indeed! What is it, papa?"

"I don't approve of Hugh's rigid views; he is too high church: church, church, church, from morning till night; why, he speaks of nothing else."

"His whole soul is in his work, papa. His great aim in life is to be a faithful labourer. If a hungering and thirsting for righteousness is being high church, then Hugh is a high churchman; but if you fear his being tainted with popery, your dread is groundless. Rome, her pomp, her falseness, her priestcraft, has far more horrors for him than for you."

"Well, well, you talked more to him on the subject than I did; drop it now: I am tired of it. My dear, is it dark?"

"Not just yet, papa—there, the clock is striking."

"Only three, my dear? the day is very wearisome."

Sometimes he would sit for hours without speak-

ing, while Maud would be unsparing in her efforts to divert him; at other times he would passively submit to her reading aloud for a while, then request in a wearied way that she would stop: her voice was tired or hoarse, and the sound fatigued him.

Remonstrances were of no use, and before the winter closed in, what with one thing or another, Maud got into a state which, if her constitution had not been a strong one, would have seriously affected her health. Happily she was sound by nature, and the strong, blooming young girl merely became a little paler, a little thinner, and prematurely old-looking.

This autumn afternoon Maud was unusually glad of letters. Anything to divert her father. She entered the house briskly, and found him sitting, as usual, in his arm-chair, near the fire.

She began at once by reading:—

"My dear Miss Gwynne,

"Frequently I have been on the point of writing before now. Do not suppose my silence has been owing to forgetfulness; far from it: there are few days in which my thoughts do not turn to Hafod.

"I am now at Connomore. My mother is

well, and urges me to remain ashore for the future, and I intend doing so. The people about here are very kind. They say they like being killed by me better than by any one else, and Dr. Connor being advanced in life wishes for a partner in doctoring; so hereafter I shall be a landsman, inasmuch as I have agreed to enter into partnership with him.

"I never could write a letter properly—I never had the power of 'expressing myself,' as the phrase goes; but I should be very glad if you could understand, from what I say, that a sense of your kindness is ever with me: also that I am the jolliest fellow in the world, having made up the quarrel I told you of.

"Pray remember me to little Mary. I hope she will receive a small parcel by this same post, containing a watch, which I trust she will accept from me. I know she is fond of that kind of plaything. My best remembrances to Mr. Gwynne, of whom I shall be glad to hear tidings, when you will be kind enough to favour me with a letter.

"Believe me,

My dear Miss Gwynne,

"Ever faithfully yours,

"PHILIP BRYAN."

"Here is another letter, papa, from Blanche; shall I read it out?" said Maud after a pause, during which Mr. Gwynne made no remark.

"By and by, my dear; you have read enough now."

Maud put the letters into her pocket, and went upstairs to take off her bonnet and shawl. Blanche's letter was full of nothing but Stephen and Florence—how they had returned from their tour, and of the rejoicings of the neighbourhood on their arrival at Forrestrange; which had been refurnished, in a great measure, to suit the elegant taste of young Mrs. Forrester.

Maud went down presently. The evening was closing in dull and gloomy, and Mr. Gwynne still sat at the fire, and when Maud rang for candles, he fretfully pushed his chair back, asking what was the use of bringing candles?

Now Maud was by no means weak and hysterical; but this heavy evening, the deepening twilight obscuring all out of doors and the subdued light from a wasting fire falling on her father's mournful attitude and sightless eyes, she burst into tears.

"I wish I was blind instead of you, papa," she passionately exclaimed; "it breaks my heart to see you thus; you *would* try and be more cheerful,

if you knew how I suffer in consequence of this depression on your part. I have very little joy on earth; why should you give way to melancholy thus, and make my life still more dreary? Papa, I wish I were blind instead of you! I do: I solemnly say——"

"Maud——"

Vehemently she went on,—

"Yes, I am weary to death. At times I wish I were dead; yet the strong heart beats on. I know I am sinful. If I were blind I might forget all—all earthly things,—see Heaven more clearly."

"I never meant my depression to affect you, my dear," said Mr. Gwynne, mournfully.

"Oh, papa," she began, but could not go on, for the tears came fast.

"Poor Maud," thought Mr. Gwynne; "she is tired of this lonely place: I must try and cheer her a bit."

And he did endeavour to cheer her up, for the time being: when her fit of crying went off, he asked her to read Blanche's letter aloud, and seemed to take a great interest in the young couple, and spoke cheerfully of their happiness and future prospects. After discoursing pleasantly in this wise, poor Mr. Gwynne presently went

to bed, thinking he had raised Maud's spirits very considerably.

And Maud went to bed, feeling as if she were the most miserable wretch under the sun.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WEAVING.

"Do you know what a man is?"

TIME went on, and Hugh, in his distant parish, gave himself up to his work; faithfully performing what he conceived to be his duty: apparently with no reward, if one might judge from the empty church; for during the year that had passed the revival had spread over the country, and parish after parish had taken up the excitement.

Maud's class had dwindled to three, who still remained faithful, but were considered by the "regenerated" to be hardened sinners.

The converted majority fled on Maud's approach, when they encountered her in the highways and byways, and in the nightly meetings they besought her conversion with much groaning, alluding rapturously to their own freedom from a state of darkness and bondage. On hearing that she had been publicly prayed for at one of their monster gatherings, as a great sinner, Maud waxed wrath-

ful. A day or two afterwards, meeting Morris, her ex-class boy (who, by the by, had become hoarse with much "reviving"), she accosted him at once; he would have escaped, but they met in a narrow lane, where flight was impossible except by turning tail, which to a revivalist of Morris's calibre would have been, to say the least, unbecoming to a high degree.

"Morris, I am glad to see you; I wish to speak to you."

"Um!" (blushing purple, attempting to slouch past.)

"No, you must wait. I am told you make use of my name at your meetings. I tell you on no account to do this again; it is excessively impertinent of you: in short, it is a liberty which I shall not allow, so take care for the future. You may go now."

Morris slunk off, just as a tailor of the neighbourhood, a man "much troubled with the bile," to use Mrs. Pritchard's expression, came in sight. Of the revivalists he was chief.

"Morris talking to Miss Gwynne," thought he of the disordered liver. "She may come over to us! They will think I converted her! Oh, that will be joyful!"

Fired with zeal and the glory of gaining Miss Gwynne over to New Ebenezer, the tailor ad-

vanced, congratulating himself on his perfect knowledge of the English language. He was not afraid of anyone in the English tongue: hadn't he acquired the twang when he went to perfect himself in the true cut of the fashions in London?"

"Ha-hem," he began.

Maud looked at him in surprise. She imagined he was going to ask for her father's custom.

"Ha-hem—hev'nly thing this—ha-hem!"

"What?" asked Maud.

"Ha!—this waking from the dead—rising up——"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Maud.

"Allegory! allegory!" he said with a profound groan.

"Be so good as to make way," said Maud, attempting to pass.

"No, child of the world, not till you have heard the voice."

She turned the other way, and retraced her steps. The tailor followed.

"Hear, child of the world!—daughter of Babylon!——"

"You had better be quiet," interrupted Maud, angry at his impudence.

Her caution was not in the least heeded. The tailor waved his hand and went on,—

"When the sons of God saw the daughters of men—ha-hem!—ha-hem!—they should have converted them."

Maud carried a big umbrella, for the day was wet. She stopped in her walk, and suddenly thrusting the point of her umbrella against his breast, he, unexpectant, was impelled with a good deal of lively force backwards, and declined finally on the flat of his back into the mud; whereupon Maud, with—it had better be confessed—accelerated movement, wended her way homewards, not without trepidation.

When she got indoors, thoughts of her recent encounter were dispelled on finding a letter from Blanche, containing an urgent invitation from Stephen to Mr. Gwynne.

His presence was needed at Woodford, the letter said; therefore the best plan would be for Mr. Gwynne, Maud, and little Mary, to pay a visit to Forrestrange. Then Blanche went on to say how glad her sister-in-law would be, for more reasons than one. The fact was, baby (there had been a little girl at Forrestrange these two months) was an ailing child; and Mrs. Pritchard, being acknowledged great in the rearing of babies, would indeed be a treasure in the house just at present.

So after many pros and cons, Mr. Gwynne

decided on going. He was anxious to revisit Woodford, and Maud must be his right hand.

A soft, hazy summer day. All the party but Maud had been seated for the last half-hour under the cedar, where Mr. Forrester reclined languidly. Maud was engaged over some writing, and now Stephen had just gone into the library to tell her to "shut up" and join the rest.

We will look at the two, and note the change in their appearance since we first saw them.

Three years before this time Maud was a growing, merry girl; fresh-looking, and very handsome: to her then, life seemed full of promise. Now, years older in appearance than she is really, ordinary people very probably would see nothing to admire in her. From her so-called education not having been completed, owing to the change in her father's circumstances, her attainments are not extraordinary; nevertheless, she stands before us to-day, a noble woman.

Stephen we recollect a fine, muscular, athletic young man. He, too, looks older, of course; and the resemblance to his father is more striking. His muscularity is a good deal hidden in decided corpulence; a jolly look of living at home at

ease having replaced the active, impulsive expression of his then usually sunburnt face.

"Shall we go?" asked Maud, looking for her hat.

"Isn't the day delicious?" observed Stephen, throwing himself on the grass, close by where his wife lay on a garden seat. "You must go for a drive, Floy; it will do you worlds of good. Are you such a good whip as you used to be, Maud? You shall drive my wife."

"Oh, no. The idea! Stephen how can you be so cruel as to agitate me," said Mrs. Forrester, breathlessly. Whereupon she began panting.

"Pooh, my love."

Here a certain trembling of the lip warned Stephen, if he wished to avoid having to carry a fainting form up to bed, it would be inexpedient to urge her any more. So rising, he asked,

"Would you like to drive out, Mr. Gwynne?"

Which Mr. Gwynne said he would like to do, and presently the two gentlemen went down towards the stables.

"Here's baby!" exclaimed Maud, as a smart woman came up, carrying a white mass of drapery, over which was drawn a green veil.

Maud lifted up the veil. Such a tiny face below! Puny and old-looking.

"Poor little baby!" remarked Maud.

"She's a sweet pet," said the nurse. "She's her mamma's constitution over again—very delicate, ma'am."

"Let me carry her for a little, nurse."

"Oh, no! pray don't; you will make me so nervous," said Mrs. Forrester.

"Shall I? then I won't. But why don't you nurse baby more (to the nurse); I am sure she wouldn't cry if you tossed her a bit," said Maud, bluntly.

"Oh, ma'am," replied the nurse, stiffly; "my qualifications is from the month."

Stephen and Mr. Gwynne here came into sight, and luncheon was announced; but Mrs. Forrester said, "She couldn't eat anything."

Stephen suggested a glass of wine, and lifted her up; hanging droopingly on his arm, she accompanied them to the house, and after many entreaties on his part, was at last prevailed upon to eat a sufficiently good luncheon. Afterwards when the carriage came round,—

"You had better change your mind, Floy, and drive out," from Stephen.

"No," she said, languidly.

"Well, my love, I am very sorry: would you like me to stay at home with you?"

"No" (in an injured voice), "I don't wish anybody to stay at home on my account."

A pause, during which Blanche and Maud came in equipped.

"Oh, you are ready—that's right: Maud, will you take the reins?" said Stephen. "I shall like to see you at work again."

Blanche shrugged her shoulders and laughingly remarked, as she led Mr. Gwynne out,

"Fear and trembling will be my portion."

"Maud is very careful," observed her father.

"But don't you remember the pace Stephen used to make her go at formerly? I was racked with terror on those occasions."

"Nothing came of it though," Maud retorted: "your dread was needless."

Blanche laughed—a queer kind of laugh: there was significant truth in the words. But Maud meant nothing beyond the present subject.

"Now then, Maud," shouted Stephen from outside: "the horses are getting restive."

Whereupon Mrs. Forrester uttered a little scream, which brought Stephen in through the open window.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, I wish you would consider me a little. How can you expect me to go if Miss Gwynne drives? And I feel so much better after luncheon, that I think I could manage a little exercise this afternoon," says Floy, plaintively.

"That's right, Floy, make haste to get ready."

"But you mustn't hurry me, Stephen: I can't be hurried; it's too much for me."

The horses were getting impatient. Mr. Gwynne, sitting in the carriage, was wondering at the delay.

"Come, Floy, it doesn't do to keep them standing; do make haste, dear."

Floy, who had not yet risen from her seat, here fell back, faltering.

"Oh, Stephen, how unkind!"

"Way then! quiet!—way!" cried the groom, as the horses, finding their efforts to go on futile, tried how backing would diversify the want of proceeding.

"My love, do have your things brought here: really 'Joan of Arc' is getting quite restive." (Joan of Arc was pawing the gravel in a very decided way.)

"If you don't choose to wait while I can put my things on, of course I can't go."

"We will wait, my dear; only do try to be quick."

"Way! good wench! way," from outside.

"I'll ring for your bonnet, Floy."

Floy sank back again, faintly exclaiming,—

"Oh, how you agitate me—how unkind!"

Hysterics were coming on, and nothing but the

most tender devotion from Stephen could avert them: she got quite pale. He petted her and bathed her forehead with eau-de-cologne.

"I can't go now, Stephen," she murmured.

"Shall I order the pony carriage for you presently? Wilks shall drive you."

"No, no, no, no: you, Stephen. I will only go with you:" and she put up her face to be kissed. It was a very tender scene indeed. Maud thought she was the loveliest little thing imaginable, but nevertheless felt disposed to shake her well.

"Now get ready, Floy," he said. "Off with you, Maud; let me start you. You don't mind sitting by Wilks? That's right, keep them steady. Well done, Maud: cool as ever. Stephen started them, and away the carriage rolled.

Miss Gwynne was "a reg'lar hand," so Wilks said. On their return, trotting briskly, they met the pony carriage.

They stopped.

"How have you got on, Maud?" asked Stephen.

"Capitally."

"You look very flourishing. They step out well, don't they?" looking admiringly at the horses. Go ahead; we'll turn and follow."

"Not yet, Stephen; it does me good to be

out: let us go a little farther," murmured the reclining form at his side.

"Just as you like, Floy. Good-bye then."

Joan of Arc and Tom Bowling rattled off in gallant style. The ponies proceeded in an amiable jog: the pace suited to Mrs. Forrester.

"Miss Gwynne is very plain, don't you think so, Stephen?" observed the lady to her husband presently.

"Do you think so?" Stephen flipped his whip at the flies.

"Very: such an Amazon too."

"Hum—yes—very likely."

"I should imagine she's sure to be an old maid: I couldn't fancy anybody falling in love with her, could you?"

"What? No—yes—that is, I don't know. Shall we turn, Floy?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLD NELL'S DAUGHTER.

"Discreet he was, and of great reverence."

Mrs. Forrester certainly was lovely—that everybody must see. In society she was immensely admired: she was *so* gentle and sweet-looking, everybody said. Although, as she averred, she was far from strong, society was a necessity to her, otherwise her constitution was tried too much. When without company this was the style of thing at Forrestrange.

Scene, the dinner table.

Stephen rather jocular than otherwise. Mrs. Forrester languidly leaning back in her chair, refusing everything that is offered. Stephen hungry, and enjoying his dinner, not noticing this. Whereat Mrs. Forrester in a plaintive way says,—

"I don't think I shall be able to sit dinner out."

Stephen lays down his knife and fork, and Blanche hers also.

"My love, do you feel faint?"

"Very!" (two or three gasps).

"Oh, my dear! here, take some wine: you are so weak." He rises and puts it to her lips. "There, you are better now."

Sometimes she says she is, and then the united entreaties of Stephen and Blanche will induce her to eat some dinner; but these attentions must be carried on to the end, or a relapse would ensue.

At other times, perhaps, Stephen may have been rather slow in perceiving she is taking nothing; then endearments and attentions fail, and she is taken to a sofa, where she will lie, palpitating, for most part of the evening.

But when there are people she likes to dinner, people whom she knows admire her, she is different. She is then so attractive, that the men usually remark,—"What a charming creature that wife of Forrester's is, to be sure!"

"She is so affectionate, so acutely sensitive, so unhappy lest those she loves do not love her," said Blanche—three years ago.

It is very strange, yet nevertheless true, that it is when she is not *the* one admired and deferred to, these faintnesses come on. But in all her flutterings and pantings she is beautiful; indeed, on one or two occasions, when the attacks were aggravated and

unexpected, the base thought came across Maud's mind that perhaps Mrs. Forrester was aware these little ways were not altogether unbecoming to her appearance.

For a few days after the Gwynnes' arrival, Mrs. Forrester had no attack at dinner time; but to-day she became so faint that she had to retire, and reclined on a sofa in the drawing-room all the evening.

Coffee is brought in, and Stephen comes into the drawing-room presently. Mr. Gwynne is seated by Blanche, Maud is doing some embroidery, and Stephen seats himself beside her. There is a flushed carelessness about him which distresses her much: several times before this evening, she has known he has taken too much wine after dinner; now, it is evident he is intoxicated. She glances towards his wife; who, however, oblivious to everything, is undergoing a nap.

Maud looks at Blanche, who appears totally unconcerned.

Stephen laughs loudly at everything and nothing; talks a great deal of nonsense which it is impossible to understand: finally falls back and snores!

Maud is grieved, ashamed to see him thus; and the truth that he is habitually given to excess of drinking, forces itself upon her. It is too true: for the last two years he has drunk deep; scarcely

ever going to bed sober. Since the Gwynnes have been at Forrestrange, he has been, for him, unusually abstemious; it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Blanche to-night looked so unconcerned: she was well used to it.

Yes, it is too true: Stephen Forrester is sinking into a drunkard. Poor, faithful Jack is almost broken-hearted; he has never opened his lips on the subject—except some few times in awkward, broken remonstrances to his young master, until he finds Mrs. Pritchard alone. Then with a burst he cries, "Oh, Missis Pritchard, you's one of the old family; none of these new-fangled, good-for-nothing rapscallions as fills the house. Oh, my poor young master!"

Mrs. Pritchard saying, "My stars, John, what ails you?" he proceeds,

"Oh, Missis Pritchard, it's a trouble on my mind day and night—I can ventor to open my mind to you; and p'raps you will tell missy, an' she will speak gentle like to him, for I remember the time when her wud wor law with him. Indeed, onless somethin' is done, he will be gone to the bad altogether; for there is allus a lot of some sort of gentlemen comin', horses an' all, sich a set as I never see in old master's time; then all night long the drink runs like water—an' then I wait to take him up to bed:

indeed, Missis Pritchard, I don't know how it will be if it goes on. Oh dear, oh dear!"

By and by, at a favourable opportunity, this is imparted to Maud; who, afterwards, when the house is still, and everyone asleep, sits in her chamber, looking vaguely up at the night sky.

One tear has rolled down her cheek, and at last, in a passionate burst of weeping, the poor racked heart finds relief. Bitterly she reflects.

"And this is his life! Stephen, whom once I regarded as the best and dearest of God's creatures! And cannot anyone help him out of this degradation? Does no one try to save him? Why doesn't his wife try? Why doesn't Blanche? They don't try; I know they don't: they cannot, or he would not be like this; I know he would not. Oh, why don't they try? His wife, with her beauty and loveliness, could influence him I'm certain, if she took a proper way. But she doesn't, she thinks only of herself; and Blanche is so cold, she will never exert herself to please him: she never would: she has no feeling; and so he will sink deeper and deeper. Oh poor, poor Stephen! Mammy to ask *me* to try! I cannot. God knows I have the will, but nothing else: no; I cannot influence him now."

The day following, the matters which had

brought Mr. Gwynne to Forrestrange were concluded. Maud and he were at Woodford best part of the day, returning late in the afternoon by the meadows. On the bridge Stephen awaited their coming.

"What a long time you have been!" he exclaimed, when, as the evening shadows grew, Maud and her father came along the path. "I have been here an hour or more."

"I wished to wind up affairs as far as I could with Rolands," remarked Mr. Gwynne. "I am glad the business is done; poor Maud must be quite sick of it. It is sad indeed, that I am compelled to make her do my work: isn't it, Maud?"

Maud made a faint attempt at saying, "Oh, no, papa;" but she was too miserable for the words to be anything but a failure.

The parties who had advanced the money to enable Mr. Gwynne to meet the expenses of the lawsuit, and his liabilities afterwards, now wished to foreclose the mortgage. With some difficulty Mr. Rolands had found others with a sufficient sum to pay it off; but the money market was higher and the rate of interest increased, which would make a serious difference to Mr. Gwynne; his income already being so limited: in fact, he would barely have enough to live on. Added to this, Maud had received a letter that morning from Hugh, who

was far from well; so there was sufficient cause for her unhappiness.

Stephen looked at her again and again. To a certain degree he knew of Mr. Gwynne's poverty; but of its extent he had no idea. A kinder-hearted man than Stephen, with all his errors, never lived, and at that moment he would have given half Forrestrange to see Maud look well and happy; but it could not be.

Presently Blanche and Mrs. Forrester, with Mary capering before them, appeared in the wood.

"Mr. Gwynne," said Stephen; "let us leave you with my wife and Blanche; I want Maud to go round by the stables with me. 'Nell Gwynne' was brought in from grass to-day; I hunted her last spring, you know, and I want Maud to see her: she's old Nell's daughter."

"Maud," he said when they were out of hearing, "I wish you would tell me what causes you to look so unhappy. If I can do anything for you —you know I am—willing—glad to do it. Can I help your father?"

He said this in a blundering sort of way; but Maud understood his meaning: he alluded to money matters. She quietly replied,

"Thank you, Stephen, I think not."

He walked on quickly, switching the heads of the wild flowers off.

"Oh, of course not—I might have known that: you never would accept anything from me," he said.

It was hard for Maud to hear this. Suddenly a strong determination came upon her.

"Stephen," she said, "there is one thing you could do for me—more than for me—for yourself."

"Well, what?" he interrupted.

"Do not drink so much wine."

Thus, without preamble, she said it.

They were now in the stable yard. "Bring 'Nell Gwynne' out," shouted Stephen to a groom who was at the other end.

The mare was brought.

"She is splendid," said Maud.

"Yes, my poor father said she would turn out well. He used to reckon her one of the most promising fillies he ever reared."

"Ay, miss," said the groom, "and ould master never made a mistake in his life: he wor singularly 'krect in his judgment, wor master."

Maud patted Nell's neck and admired her sufficiently to please even the man, who then trotted the mare round to exhibit her action. She was a magnificent creature, and Maud said so. The man wished to know "how the mare could be hotherwise, when ould master used to say she wor the arndsomest he ever bred," and he looked defiantly

round. "Wo, wench—wo, ho—gently, gently there," as she tossed her head impatiently.

"That will do; take her back," said Stephen, watching in an absent manner. "Yes, my father was singularly correct in his judgments."

"Never heerd on him making a mistake on any subjik, and lived with him thirty year and more," said the groom, leading the mare away.

Stephen and Maud returned to the house. He never said one word all the way home, and scarcely replied at the hall door to her question whether it was time to go and dress for dinner, but broke away and rushed upstairs almost rudely.

"I have angered him deeply," thought Maud; "but if it makes him more careful I am content. Perhaps, though, my interference was impertinent; it is so hard to know what is best in this weary world."

The day declined, passing away in crimson fires gleaming over wood and meadow. Maud stood on the terrace watching the sunset, and as the last glow was dying out, Stephen came up.

"You are fond of nature, Maud."

"Very. What a scene this is!"

The sunset hues faded; the river mists arose in the valley, and pale stars came out one by one in the grey twilight. From the great woods the owls hooted; the night jar rattled amongst the

waving grass, and above all other sounds, the river swelled a deep tone far below.

"Maud, it was just such a night as this, that I bid you good-bye at Woodford. Do you remember? Before I went away, and returned to find *him* dead!"

The tears rose to her eyes involuntarily.

"He was very fond of you, Maud," continued Stephen. "The groom was right when he said this evening, his old master was correct in his opinions: he was."

For a moment he paused, fixing his eyes upon her face, which the rising moon shone full upon; then he went on:

"And my father one day told me you were one of the noblest beings in creation. I remember it well: and Maud—*I think so too.*"

Immediately, without an instant's pause, she turned and went into the house. She never left her father's side that evening, and when she went into his room the last thing, to bid him good-night, she urged him so strongly to return home, that he arranged to terminate their visit the next day but one.

And when the time came, and they were actually gone, Maud felt as if she cared little enough for ever seeing Forrestrange again.

CHAPTER XXV.

WORK.

"—— Weariness
Can snore upon the flint, when rusty sloth
Finds the down pillow hard."

THEY were all glad to be at Hafod again, except Mary, who loudly lamented being brought away from "nice Forrestrange." She had been made a very great pet of by Stephen, and was thoroughly spoiled; having had pretty much her own way in everything during the fortnight's visit.

Stephen and Maud had parted, quite estranged: even Blanche noticed the change in his manner, and had asked him to "be a little more civil to poor Maud" the evening preceding their departure.

The summer days glided noiselessly on into autumn. Hugh was better, so he said in his letters, and was very anxious that they should all visit him; his lodgings, though small, could

accommodate them, and as he expressed it, "they might have their goods in common."

But Maud found there was no money forthcoming: found that not one shilling could be spared to defray even the travelling expenses, so they must stay at home till better days should come. And at secluded Hafod, shut out from the great world, Maud tried to forget the past—tried to forget all but what life brought now.

Yet not always could she forget; for there were times when the hours passed over her head scarcely noted; bright, sunshiny, cloudless hours—the weather being glorious—going by unheeded; the gay sunshine valueless to her as to a desolate wanderer over shadowless, desert wastes.

They were very poor; there was no doubt of it. This pressed sore on her.

She had led her father out for his usual walk one of these fine days; the sky was cloudless, the air breezeless, and as they strolled along the beach, he remarked,—

"I don't think this weather suits you, Maud; I never saw you listless before."

"Am I? Then I must overcome it."

"This Indian summer will soon go by, my dear; then your natural activity will return perhaps."

"Oh, yes, papa."

From that moment she determined that her

natural activity should return, whether the weather changed or not.

"What is the use of going on like this?" she asked herself; and that evening began cogitating how she might fully occupy her mind. She thought over every plan which presented itself to her. "My first duty is to my father," she thought, "I must not neglect *him*; but how to fill those unoccupied spaces into which memory and unbidden thoughts rush?"

"I must help myself from myself: determined will can do much, I know. I *will not* suffer my mind to dwell on what can do me no good. By thinking of miseries they become tenfold greater, and I have got into a wretched habit of thinking too much on these subjects. I wonder would it be possible for me to press my mind into a train of thought that might result beneficially? Could I write a story for instance? I don't know. I will try. Whether I succeed or not it will be employment for my brain, and in creating an ideal I may find refuge in a great measure from the real, which is heart-breaking."

Accordingly she set to work. At all sorts of odd moments she applied herself diligently to what she had undertaken, and soon got so engrossed that her troubles lessened materially. She worked hard, sitting up late to write out in

(it must be confessed) her bad, peculiar hand-writing, what her brain created during chance hours of the day.

For three months she interested herself thus, until, indeed, the tale was complete. "Whether it will bring me money or not, I don't so very much care," she said to herself, as she tied her MS. up in a parcel to despatch it to a publisher. "One good this occupation has already done; it has made me care less for externals, and turned my ideas from circumstances over which I have no power, and under which I have no means of action."

Not but that she earnestly hoped her work would bring in some money nevertheless, for money was wanted; sorely needed. She would have turned her hand and her brains gladly to any good account which might increase her father's income, and if her work was successful, another most important object would be gained.

How else could she arrive at this practical result? She could not leave him to go governessing. Besides her accomplishments being only moderate, no salary she might obtain would render such a step worthy of being taken. But if her present attempt at authorship were successful, the evil of poverty, and the irksomeness of great mental power having nothing to be occu-

pied on, would cease: yes, she would be far happier for employment.

Not a soul knew of what she had been doing: no one except the publisher to whom she had written. With anxiety she waited to hear what he should say respecting the MS.

It was a very cold day. Susan had been sent to the post.

However, nothing of Maud's anxiety was perceptible, and during the usual afternoon walk, her father remarked on her good spirits.

"Ah! it's all very well for young people, Maud, to take things lightly; but at my age one cannot. I am glad to see you happy, my dear; I only wish I could be so too."

Then he remarked on the cold weather, and asked her how far she wished to go; it was no enjoyment to him being out, but of course if she wished to proceed he would accompany her. So Maud quite blue in the face from chill, proposed returning.

"As you like, my dear; I must say it is too much to expect me to go out with you every day. Why can't you go alone?"

Back they go, to find the parlour fire out.

"Come to the kitchen, papa," says Maud: "the fire is good there, and you can warm yourself while I light this fire: I shan't be two minutes

about it. I will bring your arm-chair and settle you comfortably."

The ruddy light glowed on the coppers above the kitchen chimney-piece, and on the polished oak settle; and the grate and its appurtenances shone like burnished steel: it was a picture of comfort and cleanliness. Maud having lit the parlour fire, considerably blacking her hands in the process, and having to apply much yellow soap in her consequent ablutions, congratulated herself on possessing such a household treasure as Susan, who just then entered the back way from Carrag.

It was now twilight, and the handwriting of the letters put into Maud's hand was scarcely distinguishable; one, however, she guessed to be that she had been anxiously expecting for so long.

Bidding Susan light a candle, Maud in the meantime ran into the parlour where the fire flamed up bright, and by its light discovered *the* letter. She hastily tore it open. Poor Maud! it was a civil rejection of her story. There was an end of that.

She had no time to think over it, for Susan had lit the candle, and Mr. Gwynne sat in the chimney-corner, finding it so snug and comfortable, waiting for Maud to read the letters to him,

To say she was disappointed merely, would be short of the truth: she was far more than disap-

pointed; for here was a failure of her efforts, and a sudden downfall of her hopes of bettering their income. For the moment she quite forgot the good her occupation had done her in another way. However, rallying herself, she went cheerfully to the kitchen, exclaiming,—

"Papa, here's a letter from Hugh."

"Well, what does he say, my dear?"

"Oh, so provoking! such a short, good-for-nothing letter, not half a page;" unfolding it, and glancing at the contents, before coming near enough to the light to make the writing out.

"Well, read it."

Susan had placed the candle on the little round table near the fire and put a chair for Maud there, then vanished to take her shawl and bonnet off, to fold up the one, and dust the other, and put them by until Sunday.

"Well, read Hugh's letter, my dear," said Mr. Gwynne again.

Maud stood quite still by the light, the open letter in her hand, and in a low, trembling voice she read,—

"DEAREST MAUD,—

"THANK God, I have got a living; a good one, with a comfortable parsonage. My father and sisters will now have another home. I have

no time to say more, as the bells are ringing for service.

"Your affectionate brother,

"HUGH GWYNNE."

"To-morrow you shall hear more."

"Oh, I am so thankful!" cried Maud, whilst between laughing and half crying, the tears ran down her cheeks. "Oh, papa, isn't it good news? oughtn't we to be happy?" and half mad with joy, she partially stifled him with flinging her arms round his neck, and kissing him.

Mr. Gwynne could not speak, but his sightless eyes were turned to heaven in inexpressible thankfulness.

"It was only the other day," continued Maud, "that I thought, since I had grown up, I had never experienced a sense of delight; but I feel it now, papa, and it makes me cry; I can't help it: I am very happy, though."

He made no answer; joyous feelings were of such rare occurrence to him too, that he was completely overcome.

The sharp disappointment Maud had felt before was overborne by happiness. She thought of nothing but that Hugh would be well off, and continuance in this wretched poverty consequently spared to them all.

Whoever has known what it is to be poor, who has felt the narrowness and incapacity of poverty, the pain and degradation—yes, degradation—of being poor—having to scheme from one week's end to the other, how to avoid spending one shilling more than you can help; having to bring your mind to consider whether you can possibly use less butter, even to half a pound, in the house; wondering whether Susan is as careful as she might be of the bread, the last account being unpaid, and no flour for the next baking: pondering how to dole out the one quarter of mutton from the market over the week, and making a point of preferring tea and bread and butter, to dinner, to accomplish this; having mended your gloves until they will bear mending no longer, being "all mend," as little Mary said to Maud, when she held up her chilblained fingers; having your boots patched, and soled, and cramped, until the original shape thereof is quite lost—who has ever known anything of this, or of any miserable details poverty brings in its train, will understand Maud's joy at the mere prospect of an increase in the pounds, shillings and pence; let alone more refined feelings of pleasure that Hugh had got preferment.

No: poverty is not ennobling: its sordid cares

cramp and narrow the mind, deadening the sense of enjoyment, and torturing us most through our best and most generous instincts. It binds down the faculties to petty things, insignificant in themselves, of which one would know nothing, or take no heed, unless forced upon the attention by poverty. One has to encounter pinching life in its harshest, meanest form. The iron of its fetters enters into the soul; and if the harassing misery be not removed, the victim probably becomes a selfish misanthropist, uncaring and uncared for at the last.

And yet it depends on the person in a great degree whether poverty becomes an aggravated evil: those who are profoundly religious, bow to the decree, suffer patiently, and look forward to a better world; using meanwhile the talents God has given them, to improve the condition of those dependent on them, in this.

Such was Hugh Gwynne, and such in some measure was Maud. This was the difference: Hugh thought more of eternity, and worked with the idea of eternity ever before him; while Maud not thinking of eternity so much, worked with the idea of daily life before her, asking God to help her to perform the duties which He saw fit to place before her.

Hugh was spiritual; Maud, matter of fact:

the hard, rough drudgery of life was hers, and she performed it as only a noble nature could; suffering much, nevertheless.

"Papa," said Maud, when the tea was brought in, "I will give you such strong tea, to-night! I need not grudge the spoonfuls any longer."

Mr. Gwynne smiled.

"Then you think Hugh will pay the tea bills."

"That he will, and much more. Oh, papa, I cannot express my happiness."

"Shall I have a new frock, and bread and jam sometimes?" demanded Mary, who was partaking of a piece of buttered toast, which mammy in the general joy had spontaneously offered.

All at Hafod were happy that night. By the bright kitchen fire mammy and Susan discussed Mr. Hugh and his living to their hearts' content; settling in their own minds that master would live *there* now mostly, but maybe would come to Hafod occasionally in the year. After tea Susan brought in two other letters, that had been overlooked by Maud, and left on the kitchen dresser: one from Blanche, the other from Philip Bryan.

Blanche wrote thus:—

"My dear Maud,—

"Scarcely can I realize to myself that four months and upwards have passed since you were here. What have you been doing during this time? For two months, as you know, we were at the sea-side, but now we are settled at home; Florence, I am glad to say, having given up the idea of wintering abroad. I cannot say our visit to the coast was productive of pleasure to me. Florence was not able to exert herself in the least—preferring to sit quietly on the beach all day long, which I found rather wearisome. Once, indeed, we persuaded her to try sailing; but dear, timid thing, it was too much for her; she was exceedingly alarmed, and screamed in terror. The next time Stephen suggested a boat, one of the strong nervous attacks to which she is unfortunately subject, came on, so after that, of course, we never attempted it. Then again in a carriage she is wretched; and as for riding! mention it not. So we sat on a hot shingle all day during the fine weather.

"Unfortunately this did not do for Stephen, and as there always is at a watering place a set of men who do little else than play at billiards and smoke, so there was a tribe of this description here. I regret to say, somehow or other, he got to join these people, and made acquain-

tances, which, to say the least, are most undesirable.

"The truth is, Maud, that I begin to look with great concern on his present mode of life. He was always restless—that you can remember—but of late, excitement and change seem necessary to his existence. Still it was useless to think of going abroad, and he to be in this way. For there is no use hiding the fact from you, that he has got into the habit of drinking to excess. And the gentlemen friends he has lately invited here, have all been such that Florence and I could not but dislike. I spoke to him respecting this the other morning, but he lost his temper (you know how hasty he is), and declared he would have whom he chose to stay with him; that he was quite willing I should ask my own friends and never interfered, &c. &c. But have company in the house he would: he couldn't live without, he said.

"My dear friend, I am now going to ask you to do us a great kindness. Will you come and spend a month or two here? I have ever regarded you as a sister, and I know you have a sister's influence over Stephen—indeed, a far greater influence than I have. His old friend Maud being here, to ride out with him and all that, might have the effect of breaking his present

wretched associations. Do not refuse, Maud. As a sister, I appeal to you to come and do what you can for a brother. I assure you it is an urgent case. Pray write and fix your time for coming as speedily as you can.

"Your affectionate friend,

"BLANCHE FORRESTER."

Maud read the letter through without pause or comment. Mr. Gwynne was the first to speak.

"Poor Stephen! I am truly sorry. I fear he is following the steps of others of the family. If so, Maud, he will soon kill himself——"

"Others of the family!" interrupted Maud impetuously. "How?"

"Before your time, my dear. Your godfather was the only abstemious Forrester in my memory; his father and his two brothers absolutely killed themselves: they were a sad drinking set."

"Oh, papà!"

"Ah, it's too true, Maud. The poor squire knew it, and abhorred excess of any kind. I wish Stephen took after *him* more; but I am afraid he takes more after the previous generation. I have often feared he had a tendency to indulge too freely, and I was painfully confirmed in this opinion last summer; but I never spoke of it before."

"Poor, poor Stephen!" murmured Maud.

"And I don't think," continued Mr. Gwynne, abstractedly, "that Mrs. Forrester is a likely person to draw him from bad habits. She didn't appear to me to study him in the least, or to adapt herself to his tastes and pursuits in any way. No, he had to fall in with all her ways, on the contrary, which, according to my idea, is completely reversing the proper order of things."

They both sat silent for a time; great drops falling from Maud's eyes on the open letter in her lap.

"Papa, I cannot go there," she presently said: "indeed, indeed I cannot. It is cruel of Blanche to ask me."

"Well, Maud, I don't think that you are called upon to go. I really don't see why you should be subjected to the pain."

"Poor, poor Stephen!" Maud repeated.

She sat quiet for a long time, her mind wandering away to Forrestrange. "No, she could not go there: she must not. Stephen and herself were separated wide as the poles asunder. All her passionate love was dead long since; but it was painful to see him, to be with him: old memories would crowd, and then she should feel degraded, ashamed of herself. No, she could never go there again."

Mr. Gwynne presently asked:

"Why don't you read the other letter, Maud? I thought Susan brought two?"

"Oh, I forgot," she replied, starting, and immediately began to read it,—

"DEAR MISS GWYNNE,—

"I VENTURE to address you now after a long silence. I trust the summer brought you happiness, which has not fled again. I am settled at home once more, and am full swing in business. My patients (that have survived my treatment) find me plenty to do, so I have lots of practice. I hope Mr. Gwynne and Miss Mary are well. I often think of you all, and feel a desire to run over to Wales again. I tell Kate we must go on our wedding trip. I have no intention of going to sea again. From this you will understand that it is all right with *her*. I may as well further say (for I know you will be glad to hear it) we are to be married early in the spring. I think I have said all I wanted now.

"With best regards to you all,

"Believe me the faithfullest, jolliest dog alive,

"PHILIP BRYAN."

"That's all right," exclaimed Mr. Gwynne. "I am glad to hear of his happiness: he's a good fellow, I know."

"So I think too, papa. I hope his cousin will make him a good wife: he's very fond of her."

"Doubtless she will make him a good wife, my dear. Why shouldn't she?"

"Oh, true. Why shouldn't she?" repeated Maud, absently.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HUGH'S LIVING.

"For e'en that tract that barrenest doth seem,
Laboured of thee in faith and hope, shall teem
With heavenly harvests and rich gatherings."

MAUD answered Blanche's letter next day, and declined going to Forrestrange. Sympathizingly indeed she wrote, but urged her inability to do good. Blanche was so angry at the refusal, that months passed without further communication from her: indeed during the whole of the winter Maud heard no more; but having other things to attend to, she was prevented from thinking so much of this as perhaps she might otherwise have done.

Hugh was inducted to his living—Westcliffe—immediately, and he insisted on his father and sisters joining him there; so with him they remained through the winter and spring.

Now Westcliffe was the very place for Hugh; so Maud thought when she went there. An English village with its spired church, and not

a dissenting chapel in the parish. A comfortable parsonage, standing away from the village street; well-to-do farms, and picturesque, rural cottages scattered all about. Westcliffe, the parish, district, and village, was called. A district comprehending the uplands spread out from the undulating meadows and woodlands of west England, to the cliffs going sheer down to the wave-washed coast. Westcliffe was within two miles of a railway station; a line running to a great western port.

"Oh, yes," thought Maud, "it's the very place for Hugh; within easy access: and there are no dreadful 'New Ebenezers' to harrow him. Of course there is a large congregation in church."

There was: especially on the first Sunday; for everybody congregated to hear and see the "new barson."

Mrs. Jollie, of Dreath, the chief person and largest farmer in the parish, gave up her usual Sunday rest to go to church; and to impress her dignity upon the new clergyman, desired her whole establishment to attend likewise: of course a seat full of servants in the Dreath servants' pew, would be excessively imposing.

Thus it came to pass the first Sunday.

The Gwynnes are in the parsonage high-walled

pew. Opposite, sits Mrs. Jollie in her pew, surrounded by green curtains, through a rent in which part of her face is perceptible.

Hugh, in his surplice, enters the reading-desk, which fact is announced to those outside the church by a quick, short jerk of the bell, that the sexton is ringing. The bell stops: a great tramp is heard, and all who happen to be at the church door troop in. Hugh waits until they are seated; to the amazement of the clerk, who looks up at his superior, wondering whether he is going to read the service or not.

At last Hugh begins; tediously the first part is got over, for he has to stop repeatedly: evidently the people of Westcliffe consider the opening sentences, 'The confession,' &c., devised to be gone through while the congregation is assembling, for the bulk thereof come in only in time for the psalms.

Mrs. Jollie is waxing wrath; for her servants have not appeared, and she had especially charged them to come in all together. Poor Mrs. Jollie! she wishes the new people to see she is a person of great importance. But this desired effect cannot be obtained while she sits in the tattered pew, with the dirty old seat outside, appropriated to the servants, empty. Hitherto the chief end of Sunday in the Dreath idea, was

to stay at home doing nothing; with the prospect of a big pudding for dinner.

For twenty years or more the last rector had lived at Westcliffe. It was a college living, and he was a superannuated college don. So dinner and doing nothing was what the parishioners mostly attended to on Sundays.

At odd times during the lessons, the singers drop into the square enclosure called the "singing seat." What was the use of coming before? they only want to be in time for the Old Hundredth. The second lesson is nearly concluded when a noise is heard outside, heralding the advent of a troop of men, women, hobbledehoys, and girls, from Dreath farm. Mrs. Jollie looks conscious, but disdains to lift her eyes from the old, loose-leaved, mouldy Bible, in which she follows the clergyman. They obeyed orders strictly: arriving *en masse*, having waited until Sally put the dumplings in the pot, that she might swell the number. Again Hugh stops while the party squeeze into the old rickety seat, which creaks and groans under the unusual assembly. Mrs. Jollie is well satisfied: so imposing an array of servants must impress the parsonage people. Of course it is plain they belong to her, for the names of the different places are painted on the seat backs, and a big "DREATH" flourished in yellow paint over all.

Before the sermon there is to be an anthem; Solomon Lobb, clerk and head singer, being determined on *his* part to impress the new people: the singers are all there, and a clarionet is pressed into the service, to help the ordinary bassoon. The time comes. On Hugh leaving the reading-desk, Solomon, who is double-bass player, removes from his seat, as he has done at each singing before, and pushes into the singing seat. Solomon scrapes his violin; three or four heads meet, three or four growls arise, and off they go.

Clarionet fronts Maud, and performs with astonishing vigour; his cheeks are amazingly distended, and being a fat-faced man, he bears so strong a resemblance to the trumpet-blowing cherub on a monument just above, that she can hardly help laughing: indeed, to her own confusion of face, she shakes with suppressed laughter, but fortunately subsides behind the wainscot screen before her disgraceful conduct is observed.

Double-bass in the crowded seat having no room for the free use of his arm, in order to do his beloved instrument and himself justice, takes it out to the aisle for more elbow-room; in moving, he gets some bars behind, and scrapes *prestissimo* to overtake the others; while they, shouting with all their might, and as loud as they can, don't

hear the frantic efforts of double-bass, and roar on, thinking they are doing wonders and astonishing everybody: which indeed they are.

At last they conclude with a triumphant shout, leaving unhappy double-bass all alone; whose last bars form a remarkable finale.

After the sermon, there is another musical exploit in the way of a home-made, and decidedly original, composition of Solomon Lobb's.

Then the congregation rush out; everybody waiting to shake hands with everybody in the churchyard, and lingering to have a good look at the "new barson," who "breached beautiful to pe sure."

Hugh has given out that there will be school in the afternoon, and service at night; and both are well attended. Thus the first Sunday is gone by.

Another week, another Sunday, and there is Communion service. The same full congregation attends; but only the parsonage people, and an old man and three old women, remain for the final rite.

Hugh was very tired that night. He sat saying little or nothing when he and Maud were alone, after Mr. Gwynne had gone to bed.

"Well," said Maud, in a comforting way.

"At any rate, Hugh, you have not 'new Ebenezers,' and 'old Ebenezers,' to contend with here; that is one comfort."

"Certainly it is different here to what it is in Wales; but, Maud, truly a clergyman has to fight a hard fight—here as well as there. This is the difference: in Wales, the people are susceptible and excitable, they have a craving for spiritual food; here they are neither susceptible nor excitable —scarcely to be impressed; they desire no change, and are content to be left alone. This is what the Church has to contend with in these days—restlessness, desertion, on the one hand; apathy, sluggishness on the other. Truly, Maud, there is vexation of spirit and weariness in the warfare."

He sighed deeply.

"Oh, Hugh, you take things too much to heart," said Maud. "If they refuse to hear, you cannot help it. Do your duty faithfully; that is all God will require of you."

"Yes, Maud, but human nature is weak—full of infirmities, and I am impatient—impatient of the work before me. Sometimes I feel ready to lay down my burden, from utter weariness and vexation of spirit."

Maud made no reply, and presently turned the conversation. She knew that on these subjects

Hugh would work himself into a fever, and a certain flushed, anguished look coming into his face, she began talking of something else. For he was not strong; and at times a troublesome cough would attack him, if he spoke rapidly and earnestly, as he was doing now.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT WESTCLIFFE.

"We are perpetually in such engagements and situations,
That 'tis our duty to speak what our opinions are."

"MAUD," said Hugh one day, "you have wonderful influence over your Sunday scholars: what is the secret of it? I have very little, if any, I am afraid."

"I always try and interest those I teach," said Maud.

"I never met your equal in that respect. I wish I had your power," observed Hugh.

"Hugh, you are too strict—too rigid," said Maud: "I am lax to what you are."

"Lax, how?"

"In this way. You make up your mind that on a certain day a certain lesson shall be taught—or at any rate gone through—now, don't you? Well, whether it interests those you teach or not, you go on with it; hammering away with

little or no effect, perhaps, because maybe they hardly comprehend you: the lesson doesn't suit their capacities. You being determined that they *shall* learn it, weary yourself in going on through thick and thin; I, on the contrary, never stick to a subject that tires either them or myself: that is what I mean by being lax, Hugh."

"I see," he said, musingly. "Perhaps you consider I enforce some lessons too strongly?"

"I do," she replied.

"Maud, you mean more than in school now?"

"Well—yes."

"You think that I dwell too much—lay too much stress—on certain points?"

"I do."

"Perhaps you consider these points immaterial?"

"Yes—if by pressing them, you alienate the people."

"But I don't think I press anything unimportant, Maud."

"There we differ: there I am lax," returned Maud.

"My dear children," said Mr. Gwynne, who entered Hugh's study that moment, led by Mary, "what are you discussing? The school, I suppose: I never heard anything like the way you can go on, on that subject."

"We began with the school, papa," said Maud.

"The girls and boys are going to have tea and cake, soon," observed Mary, who knew of the coming feast, and anticipated it with much fervour.

"Yes, they shall have a treat at Easter, or a little after," said Hugh. "Maud, fix the day for the tea, will you?"

Which she did. And presently Hugh went out to visit the sick.

That afternoon a letter directed to Hafod, and sent on from the post-office at Carrag, was given her. Such a multiplied address had caused the post-master to conclude, in sorting the letters, that it was not for the rectory; however, on finding his mistake, he sent it up at once.

These were the contents: —

"My dear Miss Gwynne,—

"Will you laugh at me when you see why I write? I want to know whether you have heard anything of Kate, lately? Perhaps you have set us down as married before now. Well, so we should have been in all probability if she had not gone on this confounded visit.

"You must know that some months ago, Miss Forrester of Forrestrange wrote to invite Kate there. She went, promising to return at Christ-

mas; but she never came, and beyond once or twice, never wrote home, or to me. The time fixed for our marriage is past, too. I have written several times to her, but never had a reply.

"I know you correspond with Miss Forrester. Has she mentioned Kate to you at all? My fear is that she may be ill. If not, and there is nothing to account for her silence, of course she can have no regard for me. If you can give me any information on the subject, I know you will do so. This suspense does not suit me.

"My best remembrances to Mr. Gwynne and Mary.

"Faithfully yours,

"PHILIP BRYAN."

"Papa, what do you think of it?" she asked, having read it to him.

"Think of it? Why, Maud, I think Miss Bryan's behaviour monstrous: that is, if she's well."

"But where can she be all this time?"

"At Forrestrange. I never knew of any other friends she had in England."

"But, papa, to stay there so long——"

"Too bad—too bad," said Mr. Gwynne, shaking his head.

"I suppose she went there," pursued Maud, "when I refused to go."

"Without doubt, Blanche wrote for her then, and there she has been acting the part of family friend since. But it's too bad to behave in this way to Bryan."

"Shameful!" exclaimed Maud. "Poor Dr. Bryan!"

"You can so far help him, Maud, as to ascertain whether Kate is well or not. You see she doesn't answer his letters."

"I can't write to Blanche: she never answered my last letter. Besides, I don't know what use it would be," said Maud, vehemently.

"Perhaps it would be of no use; and I don't see why you should be brought in, for nothing you can do can possibly mend matters to Philip Bryan. Of course Kate is enjoying herself and forgetful of everyone. However, write to Philip and say you know nothing of Forrestrange: he'd better ascertain about his cousin himself, I think."

So Maud wrote to Philip Bryan by return of post. She having herself suffered, could sympathize with him. She said that some months had passed since she had heard from Miss Forrester, but if he wished it she (Maud) would write to ask whether Miss Bryan were well, and at Forrestrange.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DREAM.

"Do not forget."

It is the day of the tea-drinking at the rectory; but the children's feast has grown into a tea and supper for the singers as well. The choir is to come at four, with the school, to drink tea and sing all the evening. The children are to go home early, but the "grown ups," as mammy has it, are to have supper before they disperse.

The feast had been put off from time to time during this wet spring weather until Whit Monday.

The fine weather had come at last, and for the past week it had been hot, bright, and breezeless. Already it is early summer, and the woods swelling with buds, seem in the distance to quiver in the mid-day heat; the roads are quite dusty, but the country looks fresh and green. So much rain had fallen during March and April that the farmers say it won't harm if there is not another drop before hay harvest.

In the village, doors are open, and all windows that are not fixtures; the women sit sewing, or gossip with a passing neighbour, while hot, tired children be asleep in their laps; the labouring men (for it is the hour after the twelve o'clock dinner) being sound asleep in haylofts.

Presently there will be a stir: the children will be washed, and their Sunday frocks put on, carefully covered with clean pinafores; and the young women will deck themselves in holiday attire; for what with the singers and school children, the whole of the village nearly is going to the rectory.

Mrs. Pritchard commands Susan and the others who are laying out the tea tables on the lawn, Maud is gathering flowers to place on the tables, Mr. Gwynne sits near, on a chair under the lilacs which smell pleasantly this fine day, and Mary is on the grass at his feet, adorning her doll with a "bootiful necklace" of daisy heads.

"Master," said Mrs. Pritchard, seating herself on the end of one of the school-benches which had been brought for the tea, "I think Master Hugh is too good by half to these folk. In all conscience he does enough for every man Jack in the parish, without going to the trouble and expense of this sort of thing. My stars! you should see the cake (real good, not treacle sham) and buns,

down in the kitchen, let alone the handsome rump and first-rate sirloin and plum-pudding for the grown-ups' supper! 'Deed, master, it will be a sin and a shame to 'em, every one, if they don't sing, as he is anxious for 'em to do from this out."

"I think they sing very fairly, Dolly."

"'Tut, master, that been't it, by no means. What angers me is that they don't try the 'Oh, come,' and the 'We praise,' and the 'Oh, be joyful.' Don't you hear how every Sunday it's only the schoolmaster, children and missy as goes at the chanting?"

"Old-fashioned singers seldom like the chants at first, Dolly. They will get into it by and by, I dare say."

"No, master, not so long as that Solomon closes his mouth fixed, whenever the 'Oh, come' begins: I see him plain enough; and, what's more, he's mortal jealous that missy teaches the children and Moses Hitchens schoolmaster. I tell you what, master, 'twere the luckiest thing as ever was that Master Hugh invited the singers to come too to-day; there 'ud have been a pretty rumpus I know if Solomon had been left out. I always say singers are the most ticklish lot in the world to do with."

The tables soon presented a goodly sight, covered as they were with vases of sweet-smell-

ing flowers, plates of new bread and butter, hot buns, and good plum cake; and great was the excitement at the view thereof, when the children first came, towards four o'clock.

Hugh's predecessor was an old man who had lived in great retirement; there were no resident gentry near, and none took any interest in the schools or aught else in the parish, so a school feast was a thing unknown.

We all know what a tea-drinking is: we all know that the schoolmaster and schoolmistress tell the children they may eat as much as they like, but are to pocket none, and we all know that in five minutes afterwards each pocket is as full as it can hold. The children at Westcliffe were not behind the children of Britain generally, in attention to these small matters. At last the cramming is over, and repletion is the order of the day.

By and by Solomon Lobb, who is seated next Maud, turns his cup upside down. Maud, not being well up in symbolical etiquette, proceeds to press another cup of tea upon him. Pointing to his cup, he replies,—

"Miss, o'ive done wonderful, oi veels incloined to bust."

A clink all down the table in which everybody's cup is likewise reversed, proclaims tea over, and a murmur round that the party is of the same

mind as Solomon. Solomon nudges Maud to draw her attention to a dirty tune book he has produced from his pocket.

"Be you aweer on this gran dune, miss?" he asks, holding the page to view, headed "Happy Saints."

"I don't think I know it—but sing it. My brother hopes to hear all your best pieces this evening."

Solomon hemmed, glancing round the table.

"Let us zing to the braise," &c., he began in the orthodox Sunday church way, "Happy Saints."

"Theezt best wait vor schoolmaister," whispered the tenor; "thee an he be the only baze in 'Appy Saints,' an we altogether be doo strong vor un."

"Sing thoy bart an leave me alooan," retorted Solomon, *sotto voce*, and forthwith struck up.

Now the schoolmaster, being a profound bass, was Solomon's rival; but Solomon, determined to show the schoolmaster was by no means necessary in the choir, made a rush into 'Happy Saints' (which was remarkable for an astonishing roll below the line) during his absence. He was anxious to get this over before Moses Hitchens' return, for then his (Solomon's) superiority must be acknowledged by Miss Gwynne, whom he wished to impress particularly. Most important he

looked, when, to his infinite pride and satisfaction, he rolled unrivalled to the end.

"There," thought he, "schoolmaister may coom when ho loik now; o'ive 'ad it all my own way vor wunst. They can see wot oi can do."

Now the sun shining red between the trunks of the trees, warns them sunset is near; the children receive each their bun and depart, and the singer goes indoors where the odours of roast beef are prevalent.

"R'aly," observed Solomon, at the sight of the supper-tables in the rectory kitchen, "we're too vull already; nought suld ha' gone into my stomach avoor to-day: the barson dreats us rarely, he do."

The company generally indicated acquiescence in that sentiment; however, there was no lack of appetite.

"Well, I must say," remarked Mrs. Pritchard, when she brought tea into the drawing-room, "it has all passed off most excellent well." The feast being over, she viewed it leniently.

"But bless me, missy, did you get your letter to-day? I never thought on it till this moment, from the time I took it from Jem post, who came up simultaneous with the girl from the bakers. I do b'lieve letters and all were put in the basket with the buns."

Presently Mrs. Pritchard returns with the missing letter. Maud glances at the address, and, seeing it to be from Blanche, puts it into her pocket to read when alone. She is glad of this some hours afterwards.

It was well not to read it before her father and Hugh; for Blanche says she writes confidentially, and tells Maud she is very anxious and unhappy about many things. She speaks of Florence as really neither trying nor caring to make Stephen happy, but listless in everything, excepting visiting and receiving company; thinking only of herself, and fancying her health so delicate that it is utterly wearisome to be in her society, unless she has some excitement on hand. The words underlined, "*I hardly know whether it is advisable Kate Bryan should be here so much, for Stephen certainly consoles himself in her society very considerably,*" cause a sharp pain to shoot through Maud; and a startling recollection of the squire, her godfather, rising vividly before her, makes her more than half afraid: the house is so very still, and the dying candle creates such queer effects of light and shade.

She awakes in the night from an oppressive dream, of her dear godfather lying on his bed, clasping her hand and entreating her to call Stephen away from some dreadful place where

he is hidden from sight. And this dream, or rather the sensation caused by it, weighs on her like lead all the next day. Even over the packing which she has to attend to, it comes over her like a nightmare. They are packing for Hafod, as Hugh can have a holiday now.

She tried to drive away that painful dream: but it came again and again—a vision of the old squire on his deathbed, clasping her hand and imploring her to save Stephen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PHILIP.

"There is no woman's sides
Can bear the beating of so strong a passion."

It was a fine, clear, bracing day, and the sea spray came dashing into Maud's very face as she stood with Hugh watching the great waves rolling on, breaking over the dark shingle in torrents of white foam; and overhead fleecy masses of clouds went scudding across the deep blue, hurrying shadows of every hue, from purple to gray, over the green sea; and the sea-gulls, flying with the wind, were seen darting hither and thither in the fields above the beach; their white wings glancing amongst the swift-flying shadows. Such a bright, fresh day must exhilarate any one, and it did exhilarate Maud, who, holding her hat on, in the strong breeze, declared she felt quite invigorated.

"And so do I," said Hugh. "I shall return to Westcliffe with renewed energies, I believe."

"You mustn't think of going for ever so long yet," cried Maud.

"Indeed, but I must, I can't stay over next week."

"Oh, Hugh! What shall we do without you?"

"You must come to Westcliffe before the winter sets in. I can't do without you, any more than you can do without me."

"Hugh," she said presently, "do you never think of marrying? You are so well fitted for domestic life, that I think a wife would add so much to your happiness."

"Marrying? No, Maud, I never intend to marry."

"Why not?"

"Because I feel my mission is to work in God's vineyard. Not but what the married can do so equally with the unmarried: in some instances far better; but I know this would not be the case with me: I think were I to contemplate marriage, my work would be hindered."

"You have never been in love, Hugh, or you would not weigh the question thus."

He looked at her in a strange sort of way, and then turned homewards in silence. Presently he said,—

"Maud, I don't wish to deceive you: I *have* been, as you may say, in love; but it was many years ago. It began almost in my boyhood. I was too young to have an idea *why* I was so fond of—of her; but I was, and experienced my share of torment: now, I know it was her beauty that captivated me. Not willingly would I go into her society again, for I am too human not to feel the power of that beauty. Maud, you will think me weak when I tell you that for years, whenever I saw her, I was racked with what you call love."

"Tell who she was?" asked Maud, abruptly.

"No, no, it doesn't matter; it would do you no good to know."

"Perhaps you'll marry her yet?"

"Oh, no."

He got quite pale, and the light that at times came into his eyes shone there now.

"Maud," he said, "I desire no more than to dedicate myself to God's service. All is over now; and I thank God."

They were both silent as they walked up the steep road to Hafod.

"And Hugh, too, has known what it is to be miserable and wretched," thought Maud. "This is a wonderful existence—a weary, weary world; and yet people laugh over these things. I only

know that if others have felt as I have, love, which is called a delusion, is the strongest passion in the human heart: a queer delusion truly."

"Stay, Maud, and listen to the sea," said Hugh, stopping short and turning round; "how grand it is to-day!"

"I suppose it is; but I am not so enthusiastic as I used to be," said Maud: "I mean as regards the sound. It may be that I am too used to it, to hear it. Certainly there is a great noise, now that you have called my attention to it."

"Noise, Maud? is that all? I cannot describe what that sound conveys to me. In the night I hear it; in the day above all other sounds I hear it: and, Maud, evermore it tells me of eternity. Listen!"

"Hugh, how imaginative you are! I am too matter of fact to understand what you mean. Here comes Mary scampering down the hill without anything on her head! What can be the matter?"

Mary, with her hair all blown back, rushed down, and breathlessly exclaimed,—

"Make haste! make haste! run, Maud: Dr. Bryan is come again, and he has brought me a bootiful Queen Bess: oh! such a big one! make haste!"

And who should they see at the top of the hill, walking to meet them, but Mr. Gwynne and Philip!

"You are astonished!" were his first words; "but I've come to see you, before going round the world again. Most likely I shall go to sea next week."

Two more different men than Hugh and Philip could scarce be met with, and the contrast struck Maud as they walked side by side. And it also struck her — or rather with her true woman's instinct she felt—before they had been together an hour, that the same beauty had power over both. Yet they were so very different! Hugh, slight and lithe in figure, his features classical, his countenance intellectual and singularly sweet in expression; his dark eyes soft and melancholy in repose, but when earnest, shining with wonderful light. Philip, strong and active, with great width of chest, a stern, rough face, full of vigour, and deep-set eyes betraying a smouldering fire, ready at any moment to burst into flame: enemies might fear, and friends apprehend with anxious dread, the fire and recklessness of Philip Bryan's nature.

"I should think well over this going to sea if I were you, Bryan," said Mr. Gwynne as they sat in the old parlour at night, while the

wind, which had now risen to a gale, roared without, the waves dashing high on the rocks, and thundering on the beach. "Such a night as this would make me think twice before I gave up a comfortable home ashore. Hark how it blows!"

"A comfortable home! The most abominable institution in the world under some circumstances," laughed Philip. Then he added more gravely, "I would rather be fighting for life and death in the waves down yonder, than wearing life out in 'a comfortable home.' No, no, I must be up and doing," and he began to pace the room.

"What does your mother say?" asked Maud.

"The poor old mother is half broken-hearted; she cannot comprehend this restlessness. I suppose it's the devil urges me on."

"Then I would not go," remarked Hugh.

Philip laughed.

"I'm in a mood for a sea life; put it so," he said.

Mary, who had been engaged in putting Queen Bess to sleep, here suddenly asked where the picture of the pretty lady was? and was it round his neck?

Philip took no notice, but Mary, leaving Queen Bess on the rug, with her regal robe turned over

her head, went up to him, and, looking in his face, again asked,—

"Where is the pretty lady's picture, Dr. Bryan?"

"At home," he answered, briefly.

"Is *she* at home too?" pursued Mary.

"Mary, you must say good-night now," interposed Maud; "it is time for you to go to bed."

"Well, is she?" reiterated Mary, disregarding Maud, and clinging to Philip's knees.

"Come, Mary," repeated Maud.

"Tell me about the pretty lady," persisted Mary. "Is she at your home?"

"No," answered Philip, curtly.

"Where is the picture? I should like to see it so much. I should like Hugh to see it too. Where is it?"

"Mary, you must come," commanded Maud, suddenly seizing and carrying the child away.

"Oh, my Queen Bess," cried Mary.

When Mary and her Queen Bess were gone, Philip remarked, carelessly enough,

"What a good memory the child has! I am astonished she should remember my cousin's portrait, which it was a conceit of mine to carry about with me when I was last here."

An awkward pause ensued, broken by Mr. Gwynne.

"Miss Bryan, Hugh, whom you used to see so much of formerly at Forrestrange."

"I know," returned Hugh, hastily.

Philip now said he would "step out and see the night; a good blow would be refreshing."

But he stood in the passage after shutting the parlour door. The fact was that he went out to waylay Maud; who presently came downstairs.

"Tell me," he abruptly whispered, "everything you know about *her*. I can't stand this any longer."

Against the outer door the wind beat furiously, moaning and whistling through the chinks and crannies.

"I have nothing to say, further than she is at Forrestrange."

"What keeps her there? Why hasn't she answered my letters?"

"I don't know; I can't tell," she replied, hastily.

He walked to the door, opened it, and shut it again with a bang.

"By Heaven, it's a shame!—isn't it, Miss Gwynne?"

"To open the door and extinguish the light—yes," she answered in a lively way, feeling for the parlour door at the same time.

"Come, don't trifle; I'm half mad about this,"

he exclaimed, laying hold of her arm to prevent her opening the door.

"I am very, very sorry. Oh, I wish I could help you," she said, earnestly, the forced liveliness vanishing at once.

"Yes, I am half mad," said Philip, hoarsely.

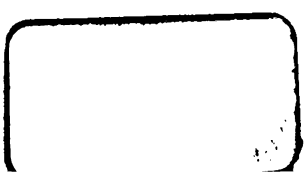
Maud knew he was suffering cruelly; but she had not a word of consolation to offer, and remained silent.

"I'll tell you what I've made up my mind to do," he said presently. "I will go straight off to this Forrestrange; then there shall be an end of the matter one way or another."

"The best thing you can do," exclaimed Maud, suddenly convinced. "I earnestly hope you will be all the happier for going."

He took another turn to the door, and strode out into the windy night. Maud fancied he was going to set out that moment, and running to the threshold, cried, — "Don't start to-night, Dr. Bryan; it is so late."

"No, if you will give me house room, I will wait till to-morrow."

Having settled this, Philip became calm. But inaction to a nature like his was torture.

END OF VOL. I.